

MAKEUP ARTIST
DICK SMITH REVEALS:
The Henson

CINEFANTASTIQUE

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THE DARK CRYSTAL

*The Remarkable
Creations of
Puppet Master
Jim Henson*





**SOMETHING
WICKED
YOUR WAY
COMES**

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE
OF
CINEFANTASTIQUE**

One of the most acclaimed horror novels of all time is about to become one of the major horror films of 1983.

It's Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, a classic story of dark horror set in the nightmarish world of a small-town carnival.

Such notable directors as Gene Kelly, Sam Peckinpah and Steven Spielberg have tried to adapt Bradbury's classic novel, but it took maverick director Jack Clayton (*THE INNOCENTS*) to actually pull it off.

The story of how *Something Wicked This Way Comes* finally made it to screen (after 26 years of effort)—and why it was made at the Disney studios—is one of the most fascinating behind-the-scenes sagas you'll ever read.

Author Stephen Rebello has spent more than a year following the film's progress, interviewing the key creative

personnel and chronicling the daily ups and downs of transforming Bradbury's gossamer prose into three-dimensional reality.

We think you'll be delighted with our in-depth text and exclusive behind-the-scenes visuals:

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CINEFANTASTIQUE

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The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

APRIL-MAY, 1983

THE DARK CRYSTAL is my favorite kind of fantasy film, one that seeks to create an incredibly strange, yet believably real, alternate universe; for me, the stranger, the better.

I love to contemplate worlds far different from our own, and experience the thrill of seeing them brought to life on film, a medium that can make even the wildest dreams seem palpably real. The sense of awe and wonder that is evoked from seeing and believing the unbelievable is the core of the *cinefantastique* experience—but few horror, fantasy or science fiction films have ever attempted to thrill us on such a grand scale.

This issue provides the full behind-the-scenes story of puppet master Jim Henson's vast undertaking, a seven-year odyssey of experimentation and discovery that has extended the limits of what the genre can do to amaze us. Henson and his talented crew of craftsmen and filmmakers detail the evolution of the Muppet film technology into the refined special effects techniques that spawned the creation of Yoda for THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, and the creatures and characters that people the bizarre world of THE DARK CRYSTAL. A companion piece surveys Henson's puppet film career, from his days in live television and commercials to his latest series for cable-TV, FRAGGLE ROCK.

The puppet characters of THE DARK CRYSTAL represent a new state-of-the-art that far surpasses the limited outings of previously articulated characters like Yoda and E.T. The realistic movements and expression of Aughra, the Keeper of Secrets, and the multi-limbed urRu Mystics demonstrate how thoroughly convincing puppet verisimilitude can be in even the strangest of forms.

It is somehow insufficient to say that Henson's latest film is unique. It breaks new ground. It changes the way fantasy films will be made. It makes possible the filming of genre projects that would have been heretofore unthinkable. This new potential for filmmakers to realize their wildest imaginations is the true wonder of THE DARK CRYSTAL.

Frederick S. Clarke

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It began with the idea of reptiles at a cocktail party. Five years and \$25 million later, Jim Henson had created a strange new world, teeming with life. More than just a new state-of-the-art, the film is a unique achievement.

Article by Alan Jones



25 OF PRECOCIOUS PIGS, SINGING CABBAGES AND A LITTLE GREEN FROG NAMED KERMIT

Jim Henson has taught a generation of kids how to count, created one of the best TV shows of all time, and become the world's most successful puppeteer. But ironically, Henson never wanted to work with puppets. "I just did it," he laughed, "to work my way through school."

Career retrospect by Judith P. Harris



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It is a commercial film filled with ideas; science fiction on a high intellectual plane. It is an original work in a field cluttered with remakes. It is, quite simply, director David Cronenberg's most daring step in his continuing odyssey of Mind and Body.

Review by Tim Lucas



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It was the best of assignments; it was the worst of assignments. For Dick Smith, creating a progressive series of old-age makeups for David Bowie was a juicy challenge. But trying to crumble a slew of mummies was nearly more than he could chew.

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VIDEODROME

A REMARKABLE BLEND OF MAN, MACHINE & PERVERSION FROM THE

In his pivotal work, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*," Marshall McLuhan remarked that movie theaters were once called "bioscopes" because of their visual presentations of moving life forms. He also noted, "On film, the mechanical appears as organic." Now, nearly 20 years later, David Cronenberg—another Toronto personality—has made a film that uses such concepts as a springboard to horror.

VIDEODROME is the story of Max Renn (James Woods), owner of Toronto's Civic TV, Channel 83—"The one you take to bed with you," its promos warmly intone—a small and seedy cable outfit specializing in sexually or violently explicit programming. Renn is looking for a show that will be "tough" enough to lend a much-needed edge to Civic's public image. One day, a video pirate whom Renn employs locks onto an apparently Malaysian signal that brings to their attention *Videodrome*, a very realistic-looking S&M theater piece featuring one set, two hooded goons and various naked victims.

REVIEW BY TIM LUCAS

While trying to track down the signal's owners, Renn becomes personally obsessed with *Videodrome*, watching the bootlegged tapes constantly. At the same time, he pursues an identical toughness in his sex life, shacking up with pop psychologist Nicki Brand (Deborah Harry), who introduces him to light sadism as their bare bodies bask in the light of *Videodrome*. Then Max begins to hallucinate. He finds himself transported onto the *Videodrome* set and imagining himself striking women (who, for a split second, become Nicki) whom he hasn't really touched. When a colleague informs him that *Videodrome* is the real thing—Snuff TV from Pittsburgh—Renn's fascination with it (and personal violence) intensifies, as do his hallucinations.

Extended exposure to the *Videodrome* broadcast signal, you see, develops a tumor-like organ in the brain, via the retina, which causes a viewer's fantasies to become real—for that person.

When Nicki Brand disappears from Renn's life and reappears in an episode of *Videodrome*, a long labial slit opens under a rash on Renn's stomach, his hand sprouts a biomechanical pistol, and he becomes (in

his fantasy) a programmed assassin for the evil political forces which have stolen the signal from its benign originator, media prophet Professor Brian O'Blivion (Jack Creley) and his daughter, Bianca (Sonja Smits).

Clearly then, this material occupies a higher intellectual plane than that to which even science fiction films are commonly accustomed. Its central questions—"What is reality?" and "Is violence intrinsic to sexuality, and/or vice versa?"—cannot be met blankly.

Ronald Sanders has edited the film very tightly indeed and, at 88 minutes, despite the heavy questions it asks, VIDEODROME doesn't wait around for you. Howard Shore's perceptive, mesmerizing score—fraught with breathing and heartbeat motifs, and blending acoustic and electronic themes as the narrative unites Man with Machine—slams the viscera memorably, and makes the very texture of the celluloid seem human.

It is almost foolhardy to consider the special makeup effects work in VIDEODROME separately from the performances because they are so convincingly merged with them. Rick Baker's EFX crew (more than half of which is abominably uncredited, due

to a restriction of Canadian tax and union laws), augmented at times by shows-of-strength from video effects designer Michael Lennick, creates images that could conceivably live forever:

Renn's stomach slit grinding a man's hand down to a fleshy, ticking hand grenade that explodes; a snowy television screen stretching out into a gun and firing a snow of ammunition; Renn whipping a TV encased in flesh as it broadcasts the responding groans of various women he knows in his private and professional life; and, greatest of all, Renn fondling his undulating TV set, tracing its pulsing veins with his fingertips and inserting his head into a televised close-up of Nicki Brand's teasing mouth, the picture billowing out to engulf him like a mass of breast tissue. While the fact that this is Baker's best work might be debatable, the fact that this is the best film yet to carry his name is not.

Cronenberg, who has been badly disappointed by performances in some of his earlier films, coaxes out splendid ones here. James Woods, whose consistently impressive work has established him as a brilliant character actor, handles VIDEODROME

THE FILMING OF RICK BAKER'S GUT-WRENCHING MAKEUP EFFECTS

Of all the visceral shocks in VIDEODROME, most critics agree that Rick Baker's stunningly innovative special makeup effects were the most powerful. And of the assortment of flesh guns, cancer growths and the like created by Baker and his EFX crew, James Woods' stomach slit stands out as perhaps the most effective.

"I knew it would be similar to the effect we did in AMERICAN WEREWOLF, where we hid David Naughton's body under the stage," said Baker, who



had less than three months to develop a variety of makeup effects. "But we wanted to be more subtle."

In the shot Baker refers to—a full body view of the werewolf transformation in progress—only Naughton's head and shoulders were real. Similarly, Baker and his crew obscured Woods' actual chest, stomach and legs with foam latex duplicates, constructed from a cast of the actor's body.

For the scene when Woods (Max



Renn) first discovers the slit—while sitting on his couch watching *Videodrome*—the actor was required to stand without moving for more than four hours inside a hollowed sofa while Baker and his crew blended the artificial torso and legs to his exposed head and arms. The appliance—positioned at a 45° angle away from Woods' body—had regular air bladders to provide ribcage movement and tiny ones secreted in the lips of the

reddened slit for added realism.

For scenes where Renn had to walk around, the appliance (above) was affixed directly to his chest. Since that would have made it impossible to show a hand reaching inside the slit, an artificial arm was built.

For the startling shot in which Barry Convex (Les Carlson) thrusts a video cassette directly into Renn (right), Woods stood against a prop door which had an opening so the appliance

Far left: Steve Johnson and Rick Baker examine the foam latex chest used for James Woods' stomach slit. Left: Baker and Johnson begin the application process, blending the edges of the appliance to Woods' body. Woods had to remain motionless for as long as 4½ hours while the makeup was readied.

ROME

KING OF VENEREAL HORROR, DAVID CRONENBERG

DROME's first person role with wit, sensitivity and acumen. His performance, when in concert with Baker's makeup effects, seals the illusion and helps them to appear harrowingly real. Newcomer Sonja Smits, as Bianca O'Blivion, is as cool as McLuhan described the TV medium itself, while radiating a refreshing appeal that hints at Lugosi (as she liquidly boasts, "I am my father's screen") as well as Hitchcock's time-honored *femme de glace* archetype.

Deborah Harry, who came across charmingly in last year's UNION CITY, inflates Nicki Brand with a pensive, sensual ambivalence that is strangely original and extremely effective. The erotic scenes between her and Woods are masterpieces of experimentation, paradox and animal heat. And the supporting performances of Peter Dvorsky, Les Carlson and Julie Khaner are of such obvious and thoughtful quality that the dimensions of the film's reality—so crucial to its thematic balance—are absolutely enhanced.

Cinematographer Mark Irwin's grace of movement and angle makes the film's seriousness grave, its horror lucid and its sensuality pervasive. Production designer Carol Spier has

filled Renn's apartment with abstract TV imagery (his venetian blinds subtly suggest scan lines, his door is surrounded by clustered glass panels suggesting hundreds of mini-screens) and screens of all sorts. Her *Videodrome* set—assembled with black gratings and bonds, red tiles, and an electrified clay wall—throbs in the center of the film's consciousness like a harsh, unforgiving heart.

With VIDEO DROME, Cronenberg transcends his previously cultish origins and becomes a film pioneer. Here is an American rarity: a commercial film of ideas and philosophies and questions; a basically mainstream work weirdly wired with time-warps, sex-warps and horrific imagery.

When Cronenberg presents us with the fabulous image of Max Renn on his sofa, bare-chested and sporting a shoulder holster, rhythmically rubbing the red rash on his abdomen with a gun while indulging his *Videodrome* obsession, he is giving us a masturbatory metaphor that speaks eloquently of Renn's aloneness, defensiveness and the marriage of violence and sexual gratification that has taken place furtively within him.

Today's films are too often emotionally displaced—they're billions of years in the future, *homages* to bygone eras, "remakes" of "classics," purgations of unhealed Viet Nam memories, or simply escapist in design. That's fine, but who are *we*? VIDEO DROME seems the only film as yet produced in the Eighties that has a clear sense of what its *own* decade is about, that has its teeth in the meat of its own time. The focus is on the audience; its need for escapism, its festering lack of satisfaction, its nihilistic flirtation with pain to prove it can still feel *something*, and the ultimate displacement all this creates. It's an accomplishment far in excess of what even the most ardent Cronenberg enthusiast could expect.

This is risky, cerebral, demanding material. Almost certainly, Cronenberg will forfeit a share of his former audience with this ambitious film, but also gain a portion of a substantially more important one. This *should* be his ticket to mainstream respectability. Even if it isn't, VIDEO DROME is a bracingly heroic step for movies and horror and imagination; the most daring step yet in Cronenberg's continuing odyssey of Mind and Body. □



Deborah Harry as Nicki Brand.

A Universal release, 2 83, 88 mins. In color. Directed and written by David Cronenberg. Executive producers, Pierre David and Victor Solnicki. Produced by Claude Heroux. Associate producer, Lawrence Nesis. Director of photography, Mark Irwin, CSC. Edited by Ronald Sanders, CSC. Special effects designer, Michael Lennick. Special makeup effects designed and created by Rick Baker. Makeup effects assistants, Steve Johnson, Bill Sturgeon. Art director, Carol Spier. Video assistants, Lee Wilson, Robert Meckler. Assistant art directors, Barbara Dunphy, Tom Robert Meckler. Helmut by Tom Coulter. Costume designer, Delphine White. Makeup, Shonagh Jabour.

Max Renn	James Woods
Bianca	Sonja Smits
Nicki Brand	Deborah Harry
Harlan	Peter Dvorsky
Barry Convex	Les Carlson
Brian O'Blivion	Jack Creley
Masha	Lynn Gorman
Bridey	Julie Khaner
Moses	Reiner Schwarz
Raphael	David Bolt
Rena King	Lally Cadeau

could be operated from the rear.

Several other sequences in which the stomach slit appeared involved stand-ins, for which James Woods was especially thankful.

"I will work with certain kinds of special effects, but I will never have anything glued on my body again," said Woods emphatically. "The guys at EFX were as supportive as they could be, but I was standing still for four hours with that shit glued all over me. I told myself, 'Never again!'"

"It was the hardest acting day of my life," Woods added, "because I had to be brilliant in order to make it a horrific sequence and, at the same time, cover this seam here and move *this* way and hit that light—and I still had to try to act."

Tim Lucas

Les Carlson plunges a videocassette into James Woods' stomach slit, a remarkable illusion that benefited as much from Woods' expressive acting as Baker's effective makeup appliances.



COMING

THE KEEP

Michael Mann pits the Nazis and the Devil in an abandoned quarry in North Wales.

By Bart Mills

Where do you go to shoot a movie that's set in a Rumanian mountain village? Not to Rumania, or indeed anywhere behind the Iron Curtain—too much red tape. Not even to a mountain. No, you go to Wales, 100 feet down, in a damp, dark, abandoned quarry.

"We wanted a mountain gorge with very dark rocks and we wanted some kind of big fortification," director Michael Mann said, explaining why he came to Wales' bleak Snowdonia National Park to film his \$10 million Nazis-meet-the-Devil thriller, *THE KEEP*, set for a major release this June from Paramount. "We looked all over Europe. Since we were having no luck looking at things that go up, we looked at things that went down."

Mann (who only previous directorial credit was *THIEF*, starring James Caan), producer Colin Brewer and four-time Oscar-winning production designer John Box finally found what they were after in an old slate quarry located a half-hour drive, up narrow roads, from the teeming metropolis of Betws-y-Coed in North Wales. Under Box's direction, the floor of the quarry—a former storage area for unexploded bombs and shells from WWII—was transformed into a cockeyed impression of an eastern Rumanian mountain village.

Roofs slant at Grimm Brothers angles. Gabled hoods cover the crooked crosses in the graveyard. Saints with haloes stand painted on the wall of the church. Nearby, across a moat, squats the forbidding entrance to the Keep.

A "Keep," for those not up on

Director Michael Mann.



medieval architecture, is the central tower, or strongest structure of a medieval castle. Being secretive about his film, Mann won't go into any further detail. "This 'Keep' was built not to keep something out but to keep something in," he said mysteriously.

The film stars Jurgen Prochnow as the commander of a German detachment that arrives in the remote village in 1942. His job is to keep the SS from murdering everyone in town. "My character is a socialist who got drafted instead of being sent to a concentra-



Right: Exteriors for a Rumanian village were built at the bottom of a rock quarry; a huge crane was needed to ferry equipment to the set. Above: Jurgen Prochnow as a German officer assigned to the village.

tion camp," said Prochnow, who starred as a non-Nazi German officer in *DAS BOOT*. "Many Germans opposed Hitler and wound up in the camps. This film is realistic in that respect. As for the rest of it, it could be a dream, it could be a nightmare."

Ian McKellen co-stars as a Jewish antiquarian who is called in to advise Prochnow on an unusual inscription. "He's not that professor-type figure you get in a lot of horror movies who comes out of nowhere and solves the problem," McKellen explained. "He's a thoroughgoing academic who is no believer in the supernatural."

THE KEEP also features Scott Glenn as a man doomed to live forever, but who nonetheless craves mortality. He achieves it inside the Keep. "For all those centuries, he has been an observer, like watching TV alone for a thousand years," Glenn explained. "Now to prevent great evil from occurring—the imminent event of human extinction—he's got to get to the Keep."

What's inside the Keep? The answer can be found inside two locked sound stages in London, which serve as the castle's interior. "When you see this movie," Mann promised, "you'll have a very concrete understanding of what's in



there—but it will be a *felt* understanding. What you'll see will awake various associations. Eisenstein in *ALEXANDER NEVSKY* did it all with the shape of a helmet. But don't worry, you won't confuse what you see inside the Keep with Disneyland."

A college-educated product of the Chicago streets who lays down a barrage of intellectual references in a proletarian accent, Mann went to the London International Film School in 1965. When he graduated two years later he stayed in England to work for 20th Century-Fox as a production department trouble-shooter. "But I wanted to direct," he said. "So I quit and started making commercials."

Three successful years later, he decided he was at a dead end. He went to Los Angeles hoping that directing offers would simply materialize. When they didn't, he took his chance at writing, and became one of the regular writers on *POLICE STORY* and other shows.

"I became a pretty hot TV writer, so I told ABC I wouldn't write anymore unless I could direct," he said. "They hunted around and dug out this old script, *THE JERICHO MILE*." Mann's Emmy for that 1979 telefilm finally earned him a shot at his first feature, *THIEF*, which emerged as one of the critical and commercial

success stories of 1981.

Mann chose to direct *THE KEEP* because it was a complete departure from his earlier, hyper-realistic film. "In *THIEF*, I dealt with the natural world—how you get in and out of cars," he said. "This is a special effects movie, with strong dramatic elements. One wrong step here and the whole thing falls apart—which is why Dali's brush had one strand."

Mann advises avoiding the novel by F. Paul Wilson, on which the film is based. "The first thing I did with my screenplay was do away with all the explanations," he said. "I wanted to take it out of the schlock horror movie genre. *THE KEEP* is a *tale*; the German word it is *marchen*. The usual translation is fairy tale, which is wrong. Goethe, for instance, called 'Faust' a *marchen*."

"Tales work on the unconscious level," Mann added. "You don't explain what things mean. You didn't need any overt explanation. And a tale is *not* a fable. A fable, like 'The Three Pigs,' has an overt meaning. Message story-telling doesn't interest me. Nor do myths, with their emphasis on heroes whose conduct you're supposed to emulate."

"With *THE KEEP*, I'm going for the most intense experiences that can be aroused in people's hearts." □

JAWS 3-D: SHARKS LEAP INTO YOUR LAP IN THE COSTLIEST 3-D FILM EVER

What could be more frightening than having a shark, teeth gnashing, come right out of the screen?

When execs at the Alan Landsburg Company couldn't come up with a good answer, they came up with JAWS 3-D, a \$15 million project due for release this July.

The most expensive 3-D film ever made, JAWS 3-D features a new camera system developed by Arriflex, and elaborate 3-D effects created by Private Stock Effects.

Carl Gottlieb's screenplay is set at Sea World, a huge aquatic park along the Florida coast. The day before the park is to open, a great white shark swims into the lagoon.

Lou Gosset, Jr. plays a developer

who hires Dennis Quaid to build the park. Quaid's character is the grown-up son of the Amity police chief (played in the earlier films by Roy Scheider). John Putsch plays Quaid's brother, who is in town during his college's spring break.

"I've structured the film away from the earlier JAWS pictures," explained first-time director Joe Alves, who served as production designer and 2nd-unit director for JAWS II. "The only relation ours has to the earlier pictures is the use of the shark and the two brothers.

"Because we're not filming on the ocean I can make this one more of a horror film," added Alves. "I can have the shark in and out of the

light. He's lurking about. You see him, then you don't see him."

By filming the shark scenes in a huge tank, Alves eliminated many of the production problems that plagued Steven Spielberg (JAWS) and Jeannot Swarc (JAWS II). But Alves had his hands full just trying to work with, and around, the new 3-D technology. Weeks were lost while camera systems were readied and the crew familiarized themselves with the capabilities—and limitations—of 3-D.

"It took us awhile to adapt ourselves," Alves admitted. "We had to learn the language."

Although Alves had hoped to use the 3-D effect "sparingly," pro-

ducer Rupert Hitzig has added a two-minute montage of 3-D shots into the middle of the film—including leaping dolphins and a sliding trombone.

More sophisticated—and more subtle—uses of the 3-D technique are expected to come from the film's special effects, which involve composites of actors and the shark with a variety of miniature settings.

Most of the shots—which are being composited on two strips of eight-perf Vista-Vision, for later reduction onto a single 35mm frame—are being filmed "dry for wet," with full-scale water footage electronically added on high-resolution video equipment. *Nancy Mills*

STRANGE INVADERS

Nifty '50s effects are a blast from the past in Michael Laughlin's Variations on a Theme.'

By David J. Hogan

A small town terrorized by a menacing spaceship of extraterrestrials. It sounds like a plot lifted from some grade-Z Saturday-matinee programmer. And in the case of STRANGE INVADERS, it almost is.

The film is an updated blast from the past—recalling the dizzy fun of yesterday's sf while employing the sophisticated effects of today.

Director and co-writer (with William Condon) Michael Laughlin has put together an intriguing ensemble cast, headed by Paul Le Mat (MELVIN AND HOWARD), Nancy Allen, Louise Fletcher and Diana Scarwid (MOMMIE DEAREST). The \$6 million production is set for a November release through Orion.

The film's science fiction thrills will be in the enjoyable tradition of B-pictures from Hollywood's nifty '50s, according to director Laughlin. "You can start with a basic familiar idea," he said, "but you have to keep

improvising on it. This picture has been like jazz, in that we're doing variations on a theme. The '50s were a rich period for science fiction films, and we've taken a similar approach and updated it."

The alien takeover of small towns and the attendant paranoia is certainly a classic gambit of science fiction films. STRANGE INVADERS, in which the aliens may not be precisely what they appear, promises some interesting twists. Laughlin, whose most recent film was the quirky STRANGE BEHAVIOR, has aimed to emphasize plot and character development instead of empty razzle-dazzle.

"We've tried to make STRANGE INVADERS a human story," he said. "We've tried for a more romantic and stylized acting approach than what has become fashionable lately. We've hoped to avoid all the neuroticism and anguish that characterizes the work of many actors."

Laughlin's interest in an approach that will capture the purity of the '50s will be reflected in the film's visual effects, which have been created by Private Stock Effects (PSE), a young



The cigar-shaped Mothership from STRANGE INVADERS hovers over the heartland after sunset; composite and miniature by Private Stock Effects. An 18" plastic ship—designed by production designer Susanne Moore—was combined with a photographic background plate and air-brushed, animated clouds.

Hollywood house that has also handled optical effects for SLAPSTICK [13:1:4] and JAWS 3-D.

"We've geared our approach to the story, and have tried to complement it," said Chuck Comisky, who, along with Larry Benson and Ken Jones, heads PSE. "There was some great stuff done in the '50s, and we've expanded on that by using current technology to create classic effects that have a particularly rich and colorful look."

An early PSE composite of a flying saucer and mammoth mother ship hovering over a field in the twilight is stunning in its design. Other opticals created by PSE include odd light beams and the flight of mysteriously-glowing blue spheres.

An amusing sidelight to the production was the reaction of the residents of Claremont, Ontario—a location chosen for an unspoiled quality that evokes an idealized image of the Midwest—to the real-life strange invasion when shooting began.

"We liked Claremont because

everything seems stylized—trees are a little greener than we remember them," recalled Laughlin. "Some of the townspeople were shocked at first to see an army of aliens marching down the street, but later, if there was a flying saucer parked behind the church, they accepted it. It became a big summer vacation for them."

Less amused were the folks at the U.S. Air Force, to whom the production company went for technical assistance. "They refused to cooperate because they felt the story was about 'little green men,'" said Laughlin. "They don't seem to have much in the way of a sense of humor."

The military establishment may not be bowled over by the whimsical nature of the story, but Laughlin and producer Walter Coblenz hope that the same audiences which appreciated the gentler qualities of E.T. will embrace STRANGE INVADERS, as well.

"The hardware won't take over," Coblenz promised. "The film should work for all audiences." □



Watching the skies are (l-r) Kenneth Toby, who plays an insectoid alien; Paul Le Mat, Diana Scarwid and Lulu Sylbert.



Christopher Reeve in flight on the streets of Calgary, Alberta.

SUPERMAN III

Lotsa laughs, warm romance & and a super case of split personality.

By Lorraine Dmitrovic

Remaining more or less faithful to the action formula of SUPERMAN and SUPERMAN II, Christopher Reeve will return as the Man of Steel this summer for his third megabudget flight.

The \$35 million production—remarkably, the *least* costly in the series—was written by David and Leslie Newman, veterans of the earlier Superman films. Richard Lester, who replaced Richard Donner to helm SUPERMAN II, will direct.

SUPERMAN III is the story of down-and-out Gus Gorman (played in fine comic form by Richard Pryor), who discovers he has an amazing aptitude for computer programming. After he's caught using his newfound skills to embezzle from his employer, Ross Webster (Robert Vaughn), Gus is blackmailed into re-programming a weather satellite to destroy Columbia's coffee crop, allowing Webster to control the market. When Superman saves the crop, Webster and Gorman next attempt to control the world's soil supply, and they create artificial Kryptonite to scuttle any possible future super-deeds.

But instead of causing Superman's death, the mock-Kryptonite just makes him nasty, sloppy and drunk, a personality shift that leads to an inner conflict in which good *literally* wins out over evil. Ultimately, Superman battles a living super-computer in a climactic battle that is expected to tie in to an arcade videogame currently being readied by Atari.

As widely reported, Margot Kidder's Lois Lane has been all but written out of the script, allowing Annette O'Toole (CAT PEOPLE, 48 HOURS) to emerge as Clark Kent's new love interest; Lana Lang, his old heartthrob from Smallville High.

Though the earlier Superman features have had their humorous moments, Pryor's role as the jive, fast-talking computer whiz (and the film's apparent abundance of low-brow physical comedy) is expected to give the film a lighter tone than its predecessors.

Although interiors were shot at London's Pinewood Studios, exte-

riors of Smallville and the surrounding wheatfields were filmed in High River, in western Canada. Sequences set in Metropolis were filmed not in New York City, but in the relatively small burg of Calgary, Alberta. "The Calgary skyline is perfect," explained producer Pierre Spengler. And no doubt a lot cheaper to film in.

Scenes shot there include the stunt-filled title sequence, a Rube Goldberg-styled slapstick montage of pratfalls, busy women, pies in the face, hot dogs in the air, toppling phone booths, a runaway seeing-eye dog, fires, a flood, a 275-foot jump by stunt man Greg Lamb, and, of course, Superman. Local officials estimated that 30,000 spectators watched from nearby office buildings as Chris Reeve flew through downtown Calgary dangling at the end of a towering

construction crane.

You can bet that if SUPERMAN III is a success, a fourth film can't be far behind. But before that happens, producers Alexander and Ilya Salkind are planning to film the story of Superman's cousin, SUPERGIRL, who is alive and well and living in Chicago. Production is scheduled to begin this spring for a Christmas '84 release, under the direction of Jean-Topik Szwarc (SOMEWHERE IN TIME) from a script by David Odell (THE DARK CRYSTAL).

The title character—"the first teenage superhero in movie history," according to the ad copy—will be played by 19-year-old unknown, Helen Slater. No word has been given on a possible budget, or whether audiences will be exhorted to believe a woman can fly, too. □

To film scenes of Superman putting out a forest fire that threatens a nuclear power station, a two-story addition was added to an oil refinery complex in Calgary, Alberta and set aflame. Due to the flammable chemicals present at the site, firemen and paramedics stood by during filming, but there were no incidents.



CHRISTINE:

KING & CARPENTER

Christine, Stephen King's new novel about a haunted automobile, published by Viking Press, will be directed by John Carpenter for producer Richard Kobritz.

"It's a horror story about a romantic triangle," said Kobritz, who also produced Carpenter's TV movie *SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME* and the mini-series of King's *Salem's Lot*. "It's set in Libertyville, Pa., one of those small, sequestered Stephen King towns where nothing ever really happens... Christine is the name of the car, a 1958 Plymouth Fury."

The script is by Bill Phillips, who did rewrite work for Carpenter's aborted film version of King's *Firestarter*. The film's budget is speculated to run about \$10 million with a cast of unknowns, and Columbia is rumored to be in line for a pick-up distribution deal.

LEGEND OF DARKNESS: RIDLEY SCOTT'S NEXT

Ridley Scott's next project, currently in development at Universal, is an "original" sword and sorcery fairy tale, being kept under wraps. Scott, the director of *ALIEN* and *BLADE RUNNER*, sought the services of conceptual designer Brian Froud, but was turned down. Scott then hired Alan Lee, Froud's collaborator on the best-selling art book, *Faeries*, as production designer. Rick Baker, who hired many of the craftsmen who worked on *THE DARK CRYSTAL* for work on *GREYSTOKE*, is reportedly in line to provide radio-controlled puppet characters for the film.

2001 SEQUEL:

A LEGAL ODYSSEY

Producer Julia Phillips has announced the filming of 2010: *ODYSSEY TWO*, Arthur C. Clarke's sequel to 2001: *A SPACE ODYSSEY*, for release by 20th Century-Fox. But MGM—producer and distributor of the original Stanley Kubrick production—is claiming sequel rights, and has threatened legal action. Phillips purchased the film rights to Clarke's book—published by Del Ray Books, a division of Ballantine—from Clarke through his agent, Scott Meredith. Steven Spielberg, an acknowledged fan of the Kubrick film who directed *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND* for Phillips, has been speculated as a possible director. Kier Dullea will be approached to repeat his role as astronaut Dave Bowman.

SPACE HUNTER

The space opera effects of *STAR WARS* wedded to the action adventure of *ROAD WARRIOR*, comin' at ya in glorious 3-D!

By David J. Hogan

The canyonlands of eastern Utah will provide an impressive natural background for *SPACE HUNTER*, an \$8 million 3-D science fiction adventure directed by Lamont Johnson and scheduled for release June 3 by Columbia.

The Ivan Reitman production focuses on Wolff (Peter Strauss), a canny adventurer who stands to earn a fortune if he can rescue three women marooned on Terra Eleven, a planet ravaged by plague and feudal war. Wolff's life is complicated not only by the villainous Overdog McNab (Michael Ironside), but by Niki (Molly Ringwald), a teenage descendant of the planet's original Earth settlers. Other cast members include Ernie Hudson, John Wildman, Paul Boretskyi and Andrea Marcovici.

SPACE HUNTER will showcase ambitious makeup and optical effects, sets, costumes and vehicles. Columbia apparently believes the film will hold its own amid murderous summer competition, including *RETURN OF THE JEDI*.

There's no doubt that the project has heart: *SPACE HUNTER* is a film that refused to die. "I can't conceive of any picture having more crossfire," said Johnson. Originally titled *ADVENTURES IN THE CREEPZONE*, the film ran into trouble shortly after shooting began October 18 at isolated locations outside Moab, Utah.

Studio publicists euphemistically refer to the problems that led to the dismissal of original director Jean



Peter Strauss

Lafleur as "creative differences," but crew members revealed that Lafleur, who co-wrote the original story, had delivered no usable footage after two weeks of shooting. Reportedly, there were few, if any, master shots, and some scenes had been covered with just a single camera setup. At least one member of the cast was let go at the same time as Lafleur—a weekend in late October that the crew dubbed "The Halloween Massacre."

All of Lafleur's footage was scrapped, leading to a serious morale problem among cast and crew. Veteran Lamont Johnson (*THE MACKENZIE BREAK*, *THE EXECUTION OF PRIVATE SLOVIC*, *LIPSTICK*) was contacted as he was finishing an adaptation of *JACK AND THE BEANSTALK* for cable television. Johnson saw possibilities in the script, by David Preston and Edith Rey, but brought in writers Dan and Ilona Goldberg and Len Bloom to streamline the action and tone down elements he considered excessively vulgar.

Original makeup and costume concepts that were extremely "busy" and colorful were abandoned. The character of the young girl was considerably softened. Villainous King Creep became Overdog McNab, and a slave-ring subplot was dropped. In effect, Johnson—who has extensive television experience and knows how to work under pressure—started from scratch. Lafleur's work is now called "test footage." Two weeks after assuming command, Johnson hap-

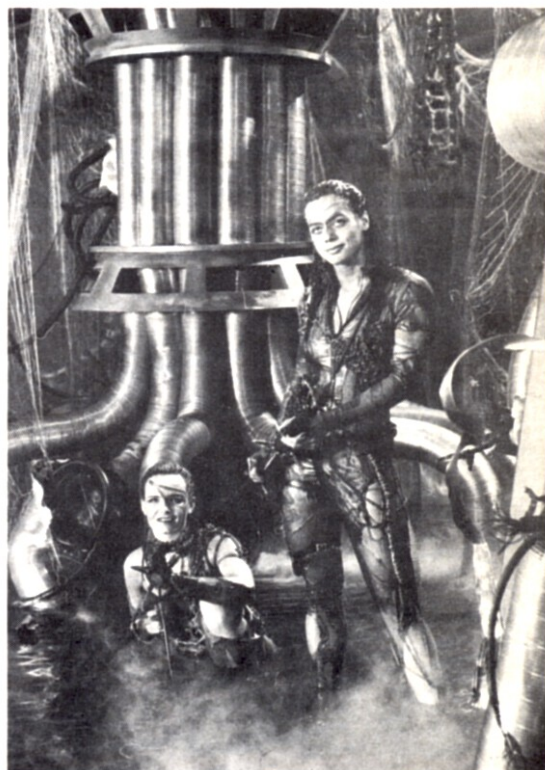
pily reported, "Morale is up 500 percent. The people are starting to work together as they should."

A projected four-week shoot in Moab stretched to six, partly because of on-set rewriting, and especially because of the Utah weather, which gets very nasty in late November. Cold rain and hail were constant problems. Cast and crew moved to Vancouver after the first of the year for five weeks of interior shooting. Production designer Jack Degovia built a "city of junk" in the trusses of a Vancouver warehouse, a city which reflects the eclectic, cannibalized culture of a formerly technological society that has slipped back into barbarous feudalism. A key sequence to be shot in Vancouver takes place in an awesome maze controlled by McNab.

Visual elements in the film are a fascinating mix of things mechanical and organic; vehicles, uniforms and weaponry are composed of random machine parts that supposedly litter the planet. Degovia and prop master Robert Joyce haunted junkyards, hardware stores and aircraft graveyards to find the sheet metal, coils, bolts and hoses that form the basis of their designs. The capstone of the design crew's efforts is Degovia's ingenious and awesome "Techno Train," a rolling combination of troop carrier, windjammer and farm. Other fanciful vehicles include Wolff's Scrambler—a hardy all-terrain rover—and menacing Trikes, three-wheeled cars driven by murderous pirates.

Though the look of *SPACE HUNTER* will be reminiscent of *ROAD WARRIOR*, Lamont Johnson shrugs off any comparisons. "*SPACE HUNTER* is going to be a much more romantic film," he said. "The relationship between the mercenary and the little girl is going to give it a lot of heart. I'm not worried about unfavorable comparisons."

At the very least, Tom Burman's makeup designs should give the film a unique character. He has created a variety of mutated and plague-ridden life forms, among them luminous-eyed "bat people"—hideously fat and nocturnal—and a 10-foot lizard man with a fully articulated face and cowl. Burman's studio has also designed ravaged cyborg features for Overdog McNab, and an articulated female android that can flash-immolate on



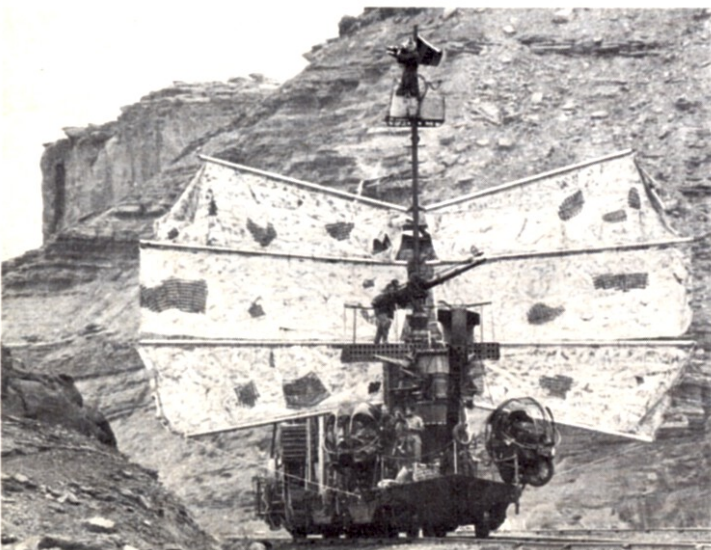
Two of the Amazon-like barracuda women who inhabit the Industrial Swamp, a former hydro-electric generating plant that has gone to seed. When the women capture Peter Strauss, they're not quite sure whether to kill him or use him for breeding stock.

cue. Steve LaPorte is handling special makeups on location, concentrating on the creation of the Scavs, scarred and demented plague victims who harass Wolff and the other good guys. Lamont Johnson was so pleased with the early Scav facial appliances that he asked LaPorte and the Burman studio to produce enough for dozens of the characters.

The 3-D photography that will be seen in *SPACE HUNTER* utilizes an innovative twin-Panavision camera system that gives clear color and images. Footage shown in dailies is remarkably vivid and effective, as well as easy on the eyes. Explained 3-D supervisor Ernie McNabb: "*SPACE HUNTER* will not simply throw the process at the audience. Ours will be very much in the context of the story."

All in all, the lineup of talent involved is undeniably impressive: Mike Minor (*STAR TREK II*) has created spaceships and shuttlecraft; special effects coordinator is E. F. vet Dale Martin; and costumes were created by Tony-nominee Julie Weiss. But the film's struggle to be born is reflected in the cautious optimism of star Peter Strauss, a highly-trained actor who enjoys popularity and solid critical regard. "*SPACE HUNTER* has the potential to be a good, gritty story about a tough guy and a foul-mouthed little girl," Strauss said. "Things were really screwed up before, but Lamont has taken charge. We're all trying to make something out of this movie." □

The mammoth Techno Sailtrain—a cross between a farm, an armored battleship and a windjammer—rumbles across the Utah desert during location photography.





Vincent (right) and his weird, chiaroscuro fantasy world (left). Expressive facial movement is animated in clay on conventional ball-and-socket armatured figures.

VINCENT

Disney backed this odd, delightful and poetic stop-motion short to the tune of \$60,000.

By David Coleman

Although it's not the most publicized film from the Walt Disney Studios, *VINCENT* may certainly be the most unusual. Designer-director Tim Burton and creative producer Rick Heinrich made the animated short film for \$60,000 from the studio.

The film concerns the anecdotes of a young boy who emulates his screen idol, Vincent Price. Rather than spending his time watching television, doing his homework or playing softball, the aptly-named Vincent would rather be reading Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, wiring electrodes to his dog for a diabolical experiment or fantasizing about dipping his obese aunt in a tub of boiling wax. *BAMBI* it ain't.

Besides its offbeat storyline, *VINCENT* also has unusual animation. Instead of the typical cel animation people associate with Disney, Burton and Heinrich used three-dimensional model animation.

"This is something that Disney hasn't experimented with too much," said Heinrich. Although they had toyed with the idea of doing a children's movie as a feature using dimensional animation in the past, they have shelved the idea due to their unfamiliarity with the process. We felt, however, that we could convince the hierarchy that a feature-length, model animated film with the Disney logo on it could be commercially feasible, and *VINCENT* was our way of showing them."

Once they had gotten the financial backing of Disney vice-president



Vincent Price

Tom Wilhite, Burton and Heinrich began production, along with animator Stephen Chiodo and cameraman Victor Abdalov, both of the ill-fated *I GO POGO* movie. Because the film was officially an "off the lot" project (meaning Disney supplied the money while the two creators furnished the resources), Burton and Heinrich rented space at Dave Allen's animation studio to shoot the black and white, 35mm film.

Burton based the storyboards for *VINCENT* on a children's short story he had created earlier, from which Heinrich cast the actual ball-and-socket models. The combination of the bizarre characters and the continually shifting expressionist backgrounds produces a film that might be termed "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari meets Ray Harryhausen."

"One of the best things about making this film," said Heinrich, "was getting to meet Vincent Price." Price, who narrates the film in rhyme, met with the creators in December 1981, before the animation was developed. "We were finished recording his dialogue within an hour. Vincent seemed quite pleased and flattered by the entire project."

"To be quite honest, it's something of a fluke that this film was made at all, because it's very unusual for a studio the size of Disney to invest in a short film such as *VINCENT*. It shows that they are serious about expanding and cultivating a new image among filmgoers. I think the industry is going to see a really exciting growth period at the Disney Studio the next few years."

BOXOFFICE SURVEY: 1982 RECAP

To nobody's surprise, Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* topped all competition in 1982's box office survey. The film racked up incredible figures, comprising nearly 70% of its studio's (Universal) genre gross, 23% of the total genre take, and more than 10% of the year's entire boxoffice. *E.T.* made more money than its five closest genre competitors combined.

Additional analysis of the 50 Top Grossing films as reported each week by *Variety*, reveals that horror, fantasy and science fiction films accounted for an amazing 44% of all film earnings, up slightly over 1981's 42.9%.

Top-grossing genre films of 1982 in the *Variety* totals are listed at right. Titles are indicated as horror (h), fantasy (f) and science fiction (sf), followed by the number of weeks in 1982 that each title made it into the Top 50 list. Please note that the dollar figures listed represent only a sample of a film's total earnings (averaging one fourth of actual rentals).

Of the 424 titles that comprised the weekly listings, 139 or 32.8% were genre titles, about the same as 1981. Breakdown by genre is as follows: 34 fantasy films, accounting for 8% of the total and 11.4% of receipts; 36 science fiction films, 8.5% of the total, but a huge 20.4% of receipts; and 69 horror films, 16.3% of the total but only 12.1% of the receipts.

Compared to 1981's results, fantasy films dropped 27% in total revenues. However, grosses for science fiction films skyrocketed (a 71% increase from '81), and horror receipts jumped 30%.

In a breakdown by distributor (below), Universal, with 11 films, grabbed the top position with 32% of the genre film business. The success of *E.T.* offset a number of the studio's disappointments, including *CAT PEOPLE*, *THE THING*, *CONAN*, and two 1981 carry-overs, *GHOST STORY* and *HEARTBEEPS*. Paramount, which was 1981's big winner with *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*, snagged 13.9% of the gross—a drop of nearly 40% but good enough for second place. □

TOP TEN MONEY MAKERS

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (Univ, sf, 29)	\$76,173,803
POLTERGEIST (MGM/UA, h, 22)	\$22,179,773
STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN (Para, sf, 14)	\$18,874,913
ANNIE (Col, f, 25)	\$13,674,985
CONAN THE BARBARIAN (Univ, f, 12)	\$10,006,470
FIREFOX (WB, sf, 8)	\$9,859,775
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (Para, reg & re-rel, f, 40)	\$9,146,717
FRIDAY THE 13TH-PART III (Para, h, 8)	\$9,040,380
BLADE RUNNER (WB, sf, 8)	\$7,401,997
THE ROAD WARRIOR (WB, sf, 21)	\$7,113,204

OTHER TOP EARNERS

AIRPLANE II: THE SEQUEL (Para, sf, 3)	\$4,113,751
AMITYVILLE II: THE POSSESSION (Orion, h, 6)	\$4,497,999
BAMBI (BV, re-rel, f, 12)	\$3,139,713
THE BEAST WITHIN (UA/MGM, h, 9)	\$1,368,730
BEASTMASTER (MGM/UA, f, 6)	\$3,561,475
THE BOOGENS (Ind, h, 9)	\$2,003,890
CAT PEOPLE (Univ, h, 9)	\$3,544,613
CINDERELLA (BV, re-rel, f, 6)	\$2,252,795
CREEPSHOW (WB, h, 9)	\$6,638,189
THE DARK CRYSTAL (Univ, f, 2)	\$3,105,989
DEAD MEN DON'T WEAR PLAID (Univ, f, 8)	\$5,564,194
DEATHTRAP (WB, h, 11)	\$7,169,808
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (Fox, re-rel, sf, 6)	\$3,725,021
FANTASIA (BV, re-rel, f, 16)	\$2,285,696
GHOST STORY (Univ, h, 9)	\$3,309,741
HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH (Univ, h, 4)	\$4,081,519
HOUSE OF WAX (WB, re-rel, h, 9)	\$1,725,909
THE INCUBUS (Ind, h, 7)	\$1,993,969
IT CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD (Para, f, 4)	\$2,129,094
THE LAST UNICORN (Ind, f, 6)	\$2,185,450
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S SEX COMEDY (Orion, f, 10)	\$3,946,609
MODERN PROBLEMS (Fox, sf, 7)	\$3,503,785
NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CLASS REUNION (Fox, h, 6)	\$2,096,320
NEIGHBORS (Col, f, 6)	\$3,111,880
PARASITE (Emb, sf, 12)	\$2,827,752
PENNIES FROM HEAVEN (MGM/UA, f, 7)	\$1,697,608
PINK FLOYD—THE WALL (MGM/UA, f, 16)	\$5,107,194
Q (Ind, h, 5)	\$1,560,150
QUEST FOR FIRE (Fox, sf, 19)	\$7,044,267
ROBIN HOOD (BV, re-rel, f, 4)	\$1,863,981
THE SECRET OF NIMH (Para, f, 10)	\$2,755,039
THE SEDUCTION (Emb, h, 8)	\$2,581,468
STAR WARS (Fox, re-rel, sf, 8)	\$3,115,436
SWORD AND THE SORCEROR (Ind, f, 17)	\$6,282,069
THE TEMPEST (Col, f, 9)	\$2,013,258
THE THING (Univ, sf, 11)	\$4,428,773
TIME BANDITS (Emb, re-rel, f, 11)	\$3,258,380
TRON (BV, sf, 13)	\$6,629,102
VISITING HOURS (Fox, h, 5)	\$3,328,732
ZAPPED (EMB, sf, 9)	\$4,039,746

GENRE FILM REVENUE BY DISTRIBUTOR

Distributor	# of Films	Earnings	% of Total
Universal (Univ)	11	\$110,431,576	32.0%
Paramount (Para)	10	\$47,875,240	13.9%
Warner Bros. (WB)	12	\$41,256,660	12.0%
MGM/UA	13	\$40,512,028	11.7%
20th Century-Fox (Fox)	8	\$25,047,635	7.3%
Columbia (Col)	6	\$22,204,001	6.4%
Buena Vista/Disney (BV)	6	\$16,996,493	4.9%
Embassy (Emb)	9	\$14,887,608	4.3%
Orion	4	\$8,919,171	3.0%
New World (NW)	8	\$3,307,083	1.0%
All Others (Ind)	53	\$31,405,143	9.1%

• Indicates a film originally released in 1981

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Roger Corman's carnivorous plant eats its way into the hearts of playgoers.

By Dan Scapperotti

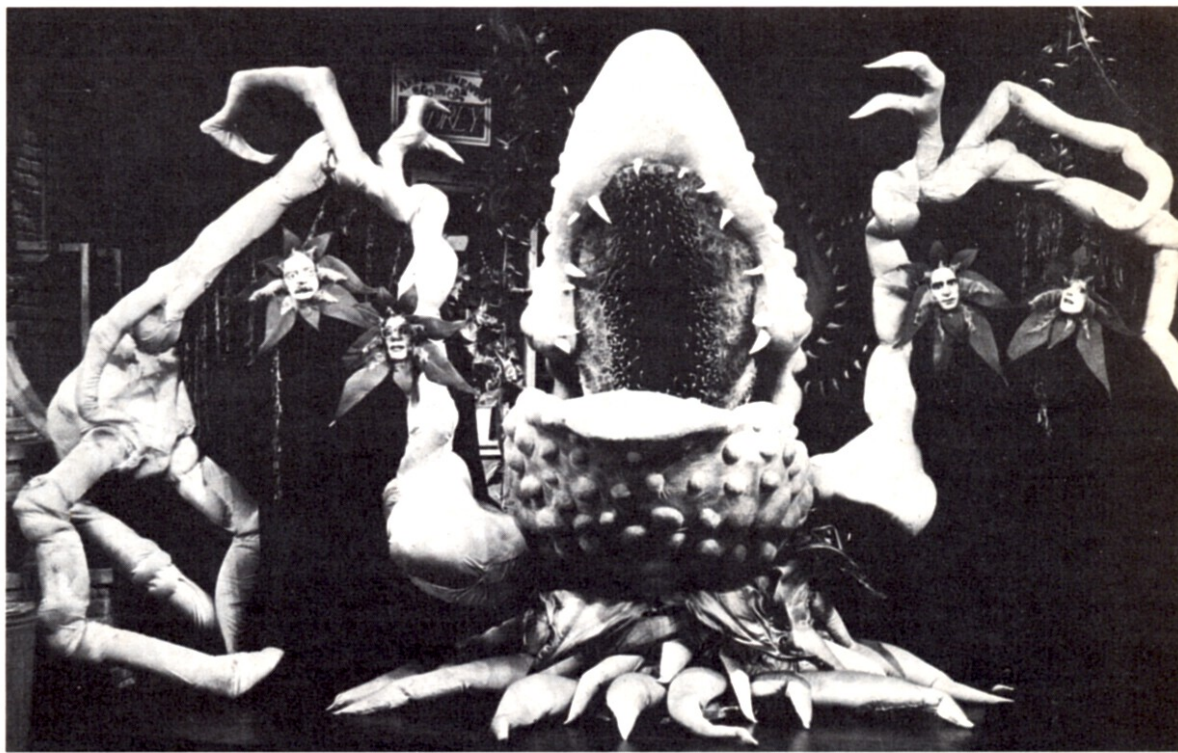
Back in 1960, producer/director Roger Corman introduced a flesh-eating, blood-sucking plant named Audrey, Jr. in his grade-B horror film, *THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*. The film became a grungy classic; eating its way into the hearts and minds of genre aficionados.

Well, Audrey is back, and she can be found munching away at a small New York playhouse. Corman's film has been transformed into a delightful evening of live theater featuring a zany cast, hilarious songs and the incredible antics of that carnivorous vegetable, Audrey II, a centerpiece that literally upstages its fellow actors.

Howard Ashman's book faithfully transfers Charles B. Griffith's comic screenplay into the world of musical fantasy. Seymour Krelboined, the downtrodden schnook who works in Mushnik's Flower Shop, saves the business by displaying a rather exotic plant he bought for \$1.95 from a Chinese florist. The plant mysteriously appeared following a total eclipse of the sun. However, the plant begins to wither until Seymour discovers that it thrives on fresh blood. (At one point, Seymour tunelessly protests: "I've given you sunlight, I've given you rain, but you're not happy unless I open a vein.")

Audrey II, named after the girl of Seymour's dreams, is restored to blooming health, and Mushnik's business flourishes as the plant draws customers from near and far. Soon

Orin (Franc Luz) and troubled schnook Seymour Krelboined (Lee Wilkof).



The maw of Martin Robinson's 18-foot prop of Audrey II suggests the advertising campaign for *JAWS*. Inside, Robinson manipulates the plant. Puppeteers on either side manipulate the heads of victims, which bloom as flowers at the finale.

customers from near and far. Soon Seymour discovers the dark side of his charge, which quickly outgrows its pot. Audrey II begins to talk, demanding "Feed Me," this time looking for more than a few drops of blood.

The Orpheum Theater, home for *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*, is a small Second Avenue house, perfect for the show. Most of the stage harbors the flower shop, with alleys and fire escapes to the sides for ancillary scenes.

The cast is uniformly good with veteran Hy Anzell making the avaricious Mushnik just enough of a scoundrel to punctuate Seymour's plight. Lee Wilkof is sympathetic as Seymour without making the character into a clown. But it is Ellen Greene as dizzy Audrey who shows the most life. Her lisping nasal delivery is a joy, especially when she belts out a song or displays her secret passion for Seymour. Also on hand is Audrey's sadistic boyfriend, Orin—who enjoys inflicting physical pain. While Seymour argues with the plant over the latter's diet, in walks Orin and promptly roughs up Audrey. Glee-fully the plant bursts into a rendition of "Suppertime" crooning, "The guy sure looks like plant food to me."

The true star of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* is, of course, Audrey II, the new breed of flytrap which goes through four stages before it engulfs the stage. The plant is the product of two talents: Ron Taylor, who provides its deep, no-nonsense voice; and Martin Robinson, who created the various mechanical props and choreographed their movements.

Robinson studied acting at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts,

but in 1977 landed a job with the famous Bill Baird's Marionettes which introduced him to the world of puppetry. As part of Jim Henson's Muppet organization, Robinson was featured as Mr. Snuffleupagus on *Sesame Street*. For *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* he fashioned four versions of Audrey II.

First seen as a wilted potted plant, manipulated as a hand puppet from below the stage, it triples in size as Seymour provides more and more flesh. A larger version is carried around by actor Lee Wilkof and is also manipulated as a hand puppet. Robinson used a fake arm which seems to be holding the plant while Wilkof's real arm manipulates it from inside, an old vaudeville trick.

For the final version of Audrey II, Robinson created a huge puppet which spreads out for nearly eighteen feet across the stage. Since the plant features the faces of its victims which bloom for the finale (a touch from the original film), Robinson took face molds of each of the actors to fashion hand puppets. Two puppeteers operate the four faces, while Robinson, sitting in the center of the flower, uses his arms to manipulate the plant.

Obviously not for all tastes, *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* is nevertheless crammed with wit, charm and boundless enthusiasm. It's an odd little curio—demented, funny and more than a bit silly—that has the freshness of an after-dinner mint.

The only question now is which Hollywood studio will bring *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* full circle, back to the screen again? Corman just could be available. □

Corman sells New World, returns to active production

In January, Roger Corman sold New World Pictures, which he founded in 1970, to an investment syndicate for \$16.5 million. Corman will continue to produce films for New World and act as a consultant.

"I'm the last person in Hollywood who finances pictures with his own money," said Corman, citing the need to attract investment capital as the reason for the sale. The new owners have access to the funds needed to make bigger films.

Also figuring in the sale was Corman's desire to get away from the day-to-day chores of distribution and back into production. Corman said he would like to direct again, but has no immediate plans. □

Corman attends the play's New York opening with his wife and daughter.



V Big-budget mini-series pits earthlings against invading aliens yet again.

By Michael Mayo

A tentative air date of May 1 and 2 has been pegged for the big-budget production of *V*, an NBC miniseries featuring the invasion of the Earth by a highly advanced alien race. Written, directed and produced by Kenneth Johnson, a veteran television writer, *V* will air during the crucial ratings "sweeps," which may indicate NBC's confidence in the two-part series. Boasted NBC President Brandon Tartikoff: "V will be to television what *STAR WARS* was to motion pictures."

Plot details of *V* are still sketchy, but the story begins with a *Childhood's End*-type invasion; the appearance of huge alien spaceships hovering over the world's 50 largest cities. Friendly at first, the aliens' true intentions (and their actual appearance, sans human makeup) are later discovered as bands of Freedom Fighters begin to resist the aliens.

The miniseries is reportedly one of the most expensive TV productions ever, hour for hour, and will rely heavily on special effects. Matthew Yuricich (*BLADE RUNNER*, CE3K) is handling matte work, while miniature master Greg Jein (*CE3K*, 1941) will create the spaceships and other model work. Production design is being handled by Chuck Davis, who created five full-sized spaceships that can be used in various configurations. Davis also used The Burbank Studio's huge Stage 25 to build a single set of the Mothership's interior.

Headlining the cast are Marc Singer (*THE BEASTMASTER*) as a freelance TV cameraman and Faye Grant as a chemist who becomes a leader of the Resistance. If the miniseries is a ratings success, it is presumed a continuing series would be the result, which would make it the first series since *THE INVADERS* (1967-68) to use this theme. □

One of *V*'s mysterious aliens poses before one of the full-size shuttle crafts designed by Chuck Davis.



THE SCORE / Some THING new from Ennio Morricone

By Randall D. Larson

While Italian composer Ennio Morricone reached international recognition and fame for his work in the Italian western genre—particularly his scores for Sergio Leone's landmark trilogy, *THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY*; *FOR A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS*; *FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE*—his occasional scores for fantastic films have, until recently gone unnoticed.

Many of his earlier scores in this genre, were borderline entries; semi-horror thrillers such as *BLUEBEARD*, and a trio of films for Dario Argento (before the director took to scoring his pictures with his own rock group, Goblin).

His first true-to-the-genre horror film, *EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC* (1977), contained a predominantly atonal score for harsh woodwinds, raspy vocal wails and pounding piano, while at the same time containing one of his loveliest themes (using plucked acoustic guitar and strings) to represent the human side of Regan.

In these works, along with scores for *ORCA*, *HOLOCAUST 2000* and *ANTICHRIST*, his music is melodically simple, often including unusual sound sources; its greatest power achieved in orchestration and repetition. From free-form atonal sounds to full-blown symphonic overtures, Morricone has left few musical areas unexplored. All of which goes to show that Morricone's versatility and distinctive stylisms have carried over nicely to the fantastic genre.

His latest such score for John Carpenter's *THE THING*, however, is something of a paradox.

Carpenter had scored each of his previous feature films himself, employing subtle, repetitious and often effective synthesizer themes. He had wanted to work with Morricone for a long time, though, and when *THE THING* was in production he decided to ask Morricone to provide the music.

The resulting work is an ominous, heavily atmospheric score for strings and keyboard that suggests the bleakness of the Antarctic research station and the unpredictable alien-ness of the shape-changing creature.

But is it a Morricone score?



Italian film composer Ennio Morricone.

As one reviewer stated previously in these pages [13:1:49], it seemed as though Morricone "strove to reproduce the electronic Carpenter ambience, instead of suffusing the score with his own personality." True: the music for *THE THING* is very much a John Carpenter score, nonetheless effective, but something of a disappointment to those expecting something unique from Morricone.

"It is not just that I write the music I want," Morricone said. "The discussions with the film director are essential."

Carpenter had flown to Rome to discuss what he wanted in the score, conveying his impressions to the composer through an interpreter, since Morricone speaks no English. Carpenter wanted a "cold" score, yet one not totally without hope. The two of them played the piano to each other as the ideas evolved.

"There was a lot of thinking about the subject," Morricone said. "We had another meeting in Los Angeles, where we rediscussed and corrected things that had been done in Rome. Then I composed and recorded the music, and I am very satisfied with the result."

Morricone wrote a great deal of music for *THE THING*, of which only a portion was used in the film. "I gave John much more music than he actually needed, and we then came to an agreement to choose one piece in particular to put in the film."

Morricone describes the principal characteristic of the score as being a static theme in which nothing much really happens. "It seems to suggest that something is going to happen," the composer said. "However, nothing happens."

The music was appropriate, according to Morricone, since the film itself ends with a question mark. "That moment is a mixture of hope and despair," he said. "Hallucinated hope and despair, as expressed in the music."

While the influence of John Carpenter seems to be strongly felt throughout the score, Morricone suggests otherwise. "I would say that I am even more *me* in Carpenter's film than in other cases. I mean, the music is more 'difficult.'" Though Morricone is known for his soaring melodies and dynamic rhythms, he

actually prefers to write music that's linear and unstructured, music that he terms "difficult."

"Sometimes you can insert 'difficult' music," he said. "But now and then the music has to be 'easier.' To attentive listeners, it may sound better, but to many others it may sound worse. Many people just don't understand it at all."

Morricone found little difficulty in adapting to the brutal subject matter of *THE THING*, although he did not really consider it a science fiction film in the same sense that his previous genre film, *THE HUMANOID*, was. "The Carpenter film is not science fiction, it's fantasy, in the sense that there are strange things that happen. But that's not enough to be science fiction. This film is more psychological."

While there are those who would have preferred more Morricone and less Carpenter, the score does seem to fit Carpenter's vision quite appropriately. There's an eerie, awesome beauty in the grotesqueness of Carpenter's shape-changing alien; likewise, Morricone's atmospheric tonalities and "difficult" motifs carry an eerie, indistinct beauty of their own.

Ennio Morricone is far from finished with the fantastic genre. Since *THE THING*, he has scored *THE TREASURE OF THE FOUR CROWNS*, a 3-D film in the style of *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*. In addition, he will also be scoring an Italian production of *HERCULES*, starring Lou Ferrigno (*THE INCREDIBLE HULK*).

Knowing Morricone's unpredictability, one thing can be said for certain about this score; the results will probably be unexpected, but certainly welcome. □

BOND VS. BOND

Sean Connery is back as agent 007. So is Roger Moore. Which Bond will audiences go for?

By Lee Goldberg

"The name is Bond. James Bond." When Sean Connery says his first line in *NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN* he'll be doing more than garnering thunderous applause.

He'll be declaring war.

Connery can be seen as a sheep who strayed only to return as the wolf preying on the flock. After playing Bond in six Albert R. Broccoli produced adventures, Connery is returning this summer to do boxoffice battle with Broccoli's 13th Bond film, *OCTOPUSSY*, starring Roger Moore as Bond. Both films open this summer.

Industry insiders predict that *NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN* will do better business in the U. S. than *OCTOPUSSY*, which is expected to capture the lion's share of the 007 audience abroad. The biggest winners will be the Bond fans themselves, who will be getting a double dose of 007.

Moore is playing Bond for the sixth time in *OCTOPUSSY*, which begins as a plot to steal the priceless Faberge Egg and soon develops into a monstrous scheme of world-endangering proportions. Once again Bond is surrounded by the usual bevy of women, headed by Maud Adams in the title role, and is outfitted with such dandy gadgets as an acid squirting pen.

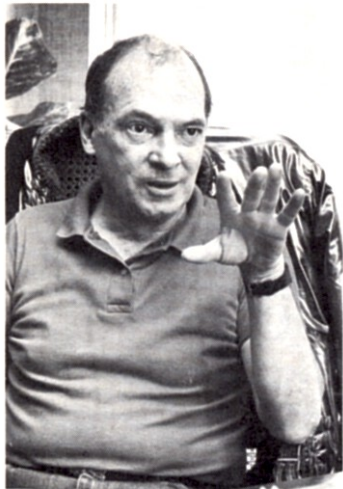
John Glen directs from a script written by Richard Maibaum and Michael G. Wilson, which is based on a treatment by George MacDonald Fraser from the Ian Fleming short-story, "Property of a Lady" (included in the book *Octopussy*). Robert Brown replaces the late Bernard Lee as "M" while Louis Jourdan steps in as the villain Kamal Khan.

Maibaum, who like other *OCTOPUSSY* personnel is bound to secrecy as far as the plot is concerned, said the film follows in the footsteps of *FOR YOUR EYES ONLY* and will downplay gadgetry and camp in favor of "incredible action sequences."

NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN, meanwhile, is basically a remake of *THUNDERBALL*, the highest grossing of the Connery Bond films, and stars Edward Fox as "M," Bernie Casey as 007's CIA friend Felix Leiter, Barbara Carrera as the seductive Fatima Blush, Kim Bassinger as Domino and Klaus Maria Brandauer as Blofeld's stooge, Largo. Blofeld has not been cast, and Q and Miss Moneybags are not part of the film.

Irvin Kershner (*THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*) is the director; Stephen Grimes, who worked with Peter Yates on *KRULL*, is the production designer; and Les Dilly, who won Oscars for his work on *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK* and *STAR WARS*, is the supervising art director.

"The fact that Connery is doing this film is the sole reason it's getting made," said Lorenzo Semple Jr., who



Screenwriter Lorenzo Semple, Jr.

wrote the screenplay. "Connery has an unusual amount of control because it depends on him. He is very much in charge of this production."

The production is the end result of a decade-long legal battle between Broccoli and Kevin McClory, who produced *THUNDERBALL* for Broccoli from a treatment he wrote with Bond creator Ian Fleming and writer Jack Whittingham.

McClory sold the licensing rights for ten years to Fleming, who turned the material into a book and sold it to Broccoli and United Artists when the rights reverted back to McClory. In the late '70s he announced the production of a *THUNDERBALL* remake entitled *WARHEAD*, written by himself, Connery and novelist Len Deighton. Broccoli and United Artists took McClory to court and lost, but McClory failed to make the project materialize after several years of on-again-off-again announcements.

At one point, Paramount Pictures was reportedly backing *WARHEAD*, with Orson Welles cast as Blofeld and Trevor Howard as "M." McClory also threatened Broccoli with the prospect of turning James Bond into a television series after financing as a feature film proved elusive.

Semple credits entertainment lawyer-turned-producer Jack Schwartzman with making the project a reality at Warner Bros. "*WARHEAD* never got off the ground because McClory was supposedly 'a very difficult personality,'" said Semple. "I heard that as long as McClory was not actively connected with the picture it would get made. Schwartzman persuaded McClory to take his money and step into the background. In effect he arranged for McClory to get out."

NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN is not touted as a remake but as a re-adaptation of the same material from which the movie *THUNDERBALL* was made. Sound confusing? Well it

is, even to Semple, who had to tangle with the legal subtleties throughout the writing of the script.

"The film has to be sufficiently close to *THUNDERBALL* so we couldn't be accused of making a totally different film," Semple said. "At the same time, however, it's not a remake. It's a parallel story based on several early screen treatments and drafts. It's still about the hijacking of two cruise missiles by *SPECTRE*, but, for legal reasons, they are being treated as a new organization. We don't have Bond saying, 'Oh, *SPECTRE* again.'"

Although Bond is brought out of retirement in this caper, little notice is paid to his age. He's still as agile and inventive as ever. Still, the Secret Service isn't wild about renewing his license to kill.

"They don't want him back at all," according to Semple, whose film writing credits include *FLASH GORDON* and *THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR*. "In fact, he forces his way back in. Times have changed. His type of thing just isn't done anymore; it's all done with computers now. They don't approve of uncontrollable operatives."

"In the original draft Bond was working in Scotland on a North Sea fishing boat," continued Semple. "In the final version, he never really left the service. He was given this ridiculous job of going up to Scotland, watching for Russian subs from a fishing boat. He was in the service but not *really* in it. Bond was safely out of the way."

Because Semple hasn't been involved with the film since he completed his script, he isn't certain how much of his story was captured on celluloid.

"I'm not sure what the opening stunt is," he said. "I hear that the one we wrote is going to be too difficult to shoot," he said. "At one point we considered *not* having a theme song or an opening stunt, but we decided that might confuse the audience."

Semple attempted to capture the flavor of the early Bond films and downplay the special effects in his script. But not all the gadgets and wizardry will be missing. Warner Bros. subsidiary Atari designed an electronic game which figures in a key sequence when Bond bests villain Emilio Largo at some arcade fun, Bond-style. The game transmits electric shocks to the loser through its joystick controls, and displays a holographic airplane battle.

THUNDERBALL was noted for its remarkable underwater scenes, including the climactic deep-sea battle between Bond and *SPECTRE*. However, Bond will barely get his feet wet in Semple's adaptation.

"We all felt underwater stuff is basically boring," Semple said. "I mean, it's all in slow motion to begin with.

We were required to have an underwater battle more than we wanted one."

As for the ending, Semple has no idea what sort of climax has been planned. "I'm sure I'll barely recognize the ending when I see it," he said. "There were various endings on it. I had a tag where Bond contrived it so everybody thought he was dead, but in a surprise ending we discover he's really alive and on an island with a girl. I like that. But I think the filmmakers feared that was too soft. They want the film to end with big explosions and then get the curtain down as quickly as possible."

Semple isn't sure how much of his script has been used or what's been changed. Francis Ford Coppola is rumored to have done an uncredited rewrite job on Semple's screenplay. Producer Jack Schwartzman is married to Talia Shire, Coppola's sister. Coppola's publicist, Bruce Feldman, called the rumors "far fetched."

Said Semple: "I can't imagine Coppola making it worse. It would be an honor, but I'm sure it never happened. The biggest fear I have is about changes made on the set at the spur of the moment by enthusiastic actors and directors." □

Sean Connery returns in July as agent 007 in *NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN*.



RETURN OF THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Super-spies Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakyn are back in business.

By David J. Hogan

Our cultural centrifuge whirls from past to present to past again. Along its journey, it picks up a few fascinations, buries a few more, and exhumes some old ones for a new generation. Sometimes it unearths something frightening, but in the case of *THE RETURN OF THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.: THE 15 YEARS LATER AFFAIR*, it brings us an entertainment that was, and probably will be, fun.

The telefilm (scheduled for airing in May) stars Robert Vaughn and David McCallum, reprising their respective roles as secret agents Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin. Patrick Macnee (as Sir John Raleigh, successor to the late Leo G. Carroll's Mr. Waverly), Anthony Zerbe, Gayle Hunnicut, Keenan Wynn, Simon Williams, Geoffrey Lewis and Tom Mason will also appear in the CBS/Viacom remake.

Producer/writer Michael Sloan, a longtime U.N.C.L.E. fan, based his script on a treatment he had written at age 19, during the series' original run. The plot finds Solo and Kuryakin called back to active duty after the prison escape of the head of THRUSH, the organization of worldwide villainy. A defecting Russian ballerina, the KGB, and plenty of old grudges figure in the action.

The teleplay's history is probably as intricate as its plot. MGM owns the rights of the U.N.C.L.E. series, and expressed interest in a theatrical version until Michael Sloan introduced the idea of turning it into a television version. The studio later passed the proposal to its television division, and finally lost interest altogether after a year of negotiation with CBS. Sloan took his script to Viacom, who purchased temporary rights from MGM and made a deal with CBS. After the film is telecast (it will receive theatrical distribution in Europe) all rights will revert to MGM.

A key figure in the update was visual consultant Robert Short, an avid fan of the original series who had

handled effects chores on *STAR TREK: TMP*, the special edition of *CE3K* and *E.T.* His chief concern was maintaining the integrity and look of the original series.

"I kept telling people, 'This isn't just a cops-'n-robbers show,'" Short remembered. "'This has to be done right.' Because of all the mistakes on the first *STAR TREK* movie, I was very aware of how wrong you can go with tone and the design of little things. *STAR TREK* had so many inappropriate elements that I didn't want to see the mistakes repeated on U.N.C.L.E."

Short prepared a reel of original U.N.C.L.E. episodes (the series ran from 1964-68) for director Ray Austin, a former stuntman who in the '60s and '70s directed many episodes of the *THE AVENGERS* and *THE SAINT*.

"I tried to show Ray the tone of the villains, the balance between humor and action, and the structure of the show," Short said. "But I was only as effective as the people who were willing to take my advice. After the various department heads came up with their designs for props and costumes, I advised them about changes I felt needed to be made. For instance, they wanted jumpsuits for the U.N.C.L.E. people that turned out to be very close to the old THRUSH uniforms. I mixed and matched, and brought the designs for both organizations more in line with what had been."

In a time when an average theatrical feature comes in at about \$10 million, the \$2.2 million al-

lowed the U.N.C.L.E. film was a real obstacle.

Fortunately, there was not a lot of activity in Hollywood at the time shooting got underway, so a particularly skilled and resourceful crew was available. Money was saved by clever location scouts who suggested that a section of Hoover Dam be used for THRUSH headquarters, and that the gaudy Ann-Margret suite at Caesars' Palace double for the office of THRUSH's head honcho (Zerbe).

But a day or two was lost when weather in Las Vegas didn't cooperate, and Short had to push to see that extra time and attention was given to props and other details. He had acquired loads of original props at the



Above: Robert Vaughn as super spy Napoleon Solo, in a pose from the 1960s. Inset: Vaughn today.

big MGM auction of a decade ago, and used many of them for the remake. Short also assisted in designs for a shoulder holster and the famous U.N.C.L.E. gun.

"Michael's original script had no provision for the U.N.C.L.E. gun—it just said 'gun.' We suddenly realized the gun's importance and got together with some of the other designers. We pounded out a prototype that's sleeker than the original, but that is clearly identifiable as an U.N.C.L.E. gun. Michael liked it so much he rewrote the script to call attention to it." Ironically, viewers won't see one of Short's prized possessions: the original gull-wing car featured in the series, which he had restored on his own. "There was just no place for it in the script," he sighed.

Another of Short's automobiles was pressed into service for a light-hearted sequence involving a "mysterious stranger" in an Aston Martin DB-5 who comes to the assistance of Napoleon Solo. Audiences will see the stranger's Walther PPK pistol and the initials JB on the Aston-Martin's license plate. And the actor playing the "stranger"? George Lazenby, the "forgotten" star of *ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE*.

Short's excitement on this project comes, in part, from a sense of nostalgia. "My friends and I used to make U.N.C.L.E. movies in junior high," he said. "Working on the film it seemed like I was 13 years old again."

Actor Robert Vaughn shared similar feelings. "I feel as though it's 1966 every time I put on the tuxedo," he chuckled. □

RETURN TO OZ: KURTZ SET TO ROLL

Production will begin this summer on *RETURN TO OZ*, producer Gary Kurtz's follow-up to *THE DARK CRYSTAL*. The live-action film, to be produced by the Disney Studio and filmed in London, will be directed by Oscar-winning sound mixer Walter Murch (*APOCALYPSE NOW*, *THE CONVERSATION*), who is co-writing the script with Gill Dennis.

The film is reportedly based on two of Frank L. Baum's stories, *Ozma of Oz* and *The Emerald City of Oz*, and concerns Dorothy's attempt to save the Scarecrow from some terrible trouble. To limit comparisons with the classic MGM version, the film won't feature songs, and will be far less stylized.

STAR TREK III: NIMOY TO DIRECT

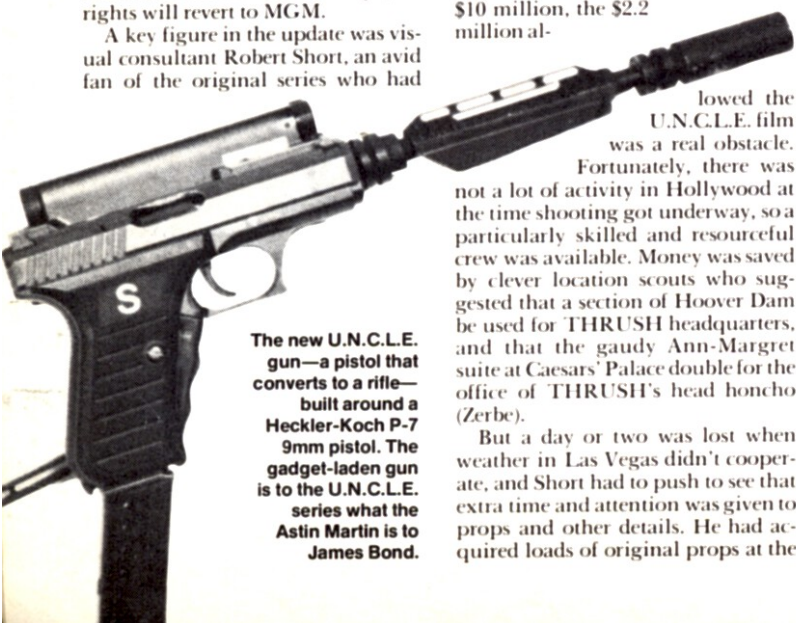
After extended negotiations with Paramount—and to no one's surprise—Leonard Nimoy has agreed to reprise his role as Spock for a third time. Filming of *STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK* is expected to start around August, for a planned summer '84 release.

The big surprise, however, is the announcement of Nimoy as director, no doubt one of his demands to reprise his role. Nimoy's previous directing credits have all involved TV shows: *MISSION IMPOSSIBLE*; *T. J. HOOKER*; William Shatner's current series; and *THE POWERS OF MATTHEW STAR*, which by no coincidence is produced by Harve Bennett, the writer and producer of *STAR TREK III*.

DEADLY EYES: IT'S A DOG'S LIFE

Studio publicists are keeping a tight lid on the story of and behind *DEADLY EYES*, the tale of giant rats loose in the sewers of a major city. The Canadian production was directed by Robert Clouse (*ENTER THE DRAGON*, *THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR*) and features a number of trained dogs wearing full-body rat costumes for the action scenes.

Though the film is scheduled for an April release, publicists are reluctant to reveal much about the dogs. "Just as Universal did with *JAWS*," we were told, "we would like to keep (the dogs) top secret." Presumably, audiences will believe giant rats were trained for the film, just as Robert Shaw was bitten in half by a real shark.



The new U.N.C.L.E. gun—a pistol that converts to a rifle—built around a Heckler-Koch P-7 9mm pistol. The gadget-laden gun is to the U.N.C.L.E. series what the Astin Martin is to James Bond.

RETURN REVENGE OF THE JEDI

STAR WARS creator George Lucas finally decided his title didn't make sense after all.

By Frederick S. Clarke

Quietly, while teaser trailers were unspooling in thousands of theaters across the country, the title of REVENGE OF THE JEDI—the \$35 million wrap-up to the STAR WARS trilogy—changed to RETURN OF THE JEDI. The news, first reported by syndicated columnist Marilyn Beck, took distributor 20th Century-Fox and the film industry by surprise. Lucasfilm, producers of the film, made no announcement of the change, but confirmed the report.

Writer, executive producer and STAR WARS creator George Lucas had changed his mind again. The movie's original script was called RETURN OF THE JEDI, but Lucas wanted a harder, more commercial title and himself suggested REVENGE, even though that title made no sense. As reported by this magazine over a year ago (12:48), the words "Revenge" and "Jedi" are mutually exclusive by definition.

"It's Lucasfilm's decision," said a publicity spokesman for 20th Century-Fox. "Fox has little say. George Lucas himself started calling it RETURN again."

The abrupt manner of the title switch is seen as further strain on relations between Fox and Lucasfilm. Rumor has it that an early rift occurred when Lucas screened THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK for Alan Ladd Jr. at the Ladd Company 24 hours before it was shown to Fox executives. Lucas is also said to be unhappy over Fox's decision last year to release STAR WARS to television.

A Fox spokesman took great pains to point out that his company wasn't miffed at the title change, but made it equally clear that Fox wasn't exactly pleased, either. When asked about the relationship between Fox and Lucasfilm, the spokesman deadpanned,

STAR WARS creator George Lucas.



VADER VS. EWOKS is a major set-piece of RETURN OF THE JEDI. Ewoks are cute furry creatures that live in tree houses who battle the Empire when their forest is invaded by Walkers. The Ewoks' design, George Lucas' attempt to corner the lucrative Teddy-Bear toy market, is being kept top secret.

"It's as good as it's ever been."

And that hasn't been very good, ever since Alan Ladd Jr.—who gave Lucas the backing to film STAR WARS—left Fox to form his own distribution company. Trade speculation is that RETURN OF THE JEDI will be the last of the STAR WARS films to be handled by Fox, and that Lucas will seek other distribution ties for two planned trilogies set before and after the saga of Luke Skywalker.

A spokesman for Lucasfilm was reluctant to discuss their relationship with Fox when asked whether the studio had been notified in advance of the title change, saying, "That's between Fox and Lucasfilm." Lucasfilm's representative also told a markedly different story behind the reason for the film's title change, denying that George Lucas had ever flip-flopped on his decision.

According to the rep, RETURN OF THE JEDI was always to be the film's title and REVENGE was used only as a smokescreen. The rep compared the use of REVENGE to calling the film BLUE HARVEST to disguise its shooting in Arizona. But a smokescreen for what?

The answer to that question lies in JEDI's super-secret screenplay, the details of which have been revealed by a source close to the production. The Jedi of the title is also the "other hope" to which a cryptic bit of dialogue in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK refers: Luke's father. In RETURN OF THE JEDI, Darth Vader overcomes the dark side of the Force and dies in a supreme act of self-sacrifice that saves the Rebel Alliance,



Vader is dead, but the spirit of the Jedi warrior that was Luke's father before he turned to evil returns—sans Vader's costume—in ghostly form.

You'll remember the lame device in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK of having Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Kenobi return in spectral form? Well RETURN OF THE JEDI is littered with such ghosts. Besides the spirit of Vader Luke's father (played by an actor other than David Prowse, who plays Vader), Guinness returns as the ghostly Obi-Wan, and Frank Oz and puppet play a spectral Yoda. The wizened Jedi master dies of old age on Dagobah, in Luke's arms. Or does he? Apparently nobody ever dies in George Lucas' galaxy, far, far away—they just turn into optical effects.

Lucas himself in unsure how far he can stretch that gag. He shot the film's ghostly happy ending three ways—with Obi-Wan, Yoda and Luke's father; with Obi-Wan and Yoda; and with Obi-Wan alone—all filmed against a black backdrop for optical double exposure.

Also very hush-hush at Lucasfilm is the introduction in the film of cute, furry characters called Ewoks, created by makeup artist Stuart Freeborn and played by midgets in suits. With the look of a cuddly teddy bear, the Ewoks

wear fierce skull-like masks and are shown briefly in the first REVENGE OF THE JEDI trailer surrounding Princess Leia with spears.

The Ewoks figure in a rousing, cheering action scene when they mount-up on flying speeder bikes to do battle with stop-motion Imperial Walkers in the process of burning down their forest. Outdoor scenes were filmed amid the towering redwood trees of Crescent City, California, with sets of the Ewoks tree-hut village built to match at EMI Studios in London. The creatures are termed by an on-set observer to be "not very convincing." Mechanical eyes, operated off the tongues of performers inside the suits, were said to have caused problems.

Other highlights of RETURN OF THE JEDI: R2D2 releasing Han Solo from his freeze-dried tomb at the beginning of the movie; R2 captured and pressed into service as a drinks waiter at a Cantina-like party thrown by Jabba the Hut, a five-foot mechanical slug-like creature (pictured 13:2 13:37); and Princess Leia wearing a Salome-type costume doing a seductive dance.

And so ready or not, the force will be back, May 25th, when RETURN OF THE JEDI opens. □

The Hunger

by Paul R. Gagne

The assignment seemed simple enough: create a roomful of walking, stalking mummies; transform rock star David Bowie into a 150-year-old ex-vampire; and devise an ingenious way to kill off Catherine Deneuve, who plays an immortal near-human creature who feasts on human blood.

Simple? Well, not really. But veteran makeup artist Dick Smith (THE EXORCIST, ALTERED STATES, TAXI DRIVER) loves a good challenge, and thought he'd need about six or seven months to handle the makeup effects for Tony Scott's THE HUNGER, which is due for release this fall from MGM.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the studio: Dick Smith got stumped.

"There were several times during preproduction when I felt that I was going to have a breakdown," confessed Smith. "I'd go storming out of the house just to get away from it all, so I wouldn't go bananas and tear something up in a rage of frustration."

Although aging David Bowie through several stages of old-age makeup was probably the most critical makeup assignment story-wise, preparing for a series of shots of disintegrating mummies—needed as a set-up for the film's climax—proved to be the stumbling block for Smith and his crew.

"They gave us about seven months to do the work, which at the time seemed to be adequate," Smith recalled. "It turned out to be barely enough because we had so much unexpected difficulty working out the crumbling mummy effects. They took much, much longer than planned. Fortunately, director Tony Scott ran about a week over schedule, and that was exactly what we needed to finish up the work, pack everything up and get it over there in time. It was a close call, and one of the most harrowing assignments ever. The pressure was tremendous, as bad as ALTERED STATES [see 11:114], and I swore I'd never get into that kind of fix again."

David Bowie's old-age makeups were a dream assignment, but making mummies crumble was more like a nightmare.

Although the ultimate success of THE HUNGER [13:2 13:5] will not rely on makeup effects as much as, say, ALTERED STATES or THE THING, Smith's work was crucial to illustrating one of the film's central premises: the rapid aging of youthful-looking people, up to 150 years old and beyond.

The story is based on Whitley Strieber's best-selling novel (see sidebar, page 22), and revolves

around a strange, beautiful woman named Miriam, played in the film by former model Catherine Deneuve. Miriam looks human, but is actually a member of a dwindling species that lives for thousands of years without aging, sustained by consuming human blood.

But Miriam isn't your conventional vampire. As producer Richard Shepherd explains: "Her race has always been among us. Miriam

makes a reference to her people being a migratory breed, as indeed vampires of legend are. But there's no one in a cape or turning into a bat in this movie. These are elegant people with great knowledge of the arts, living in this incredibly beautiful townhouse in New York, surrounded by the artifacts of the centuries."

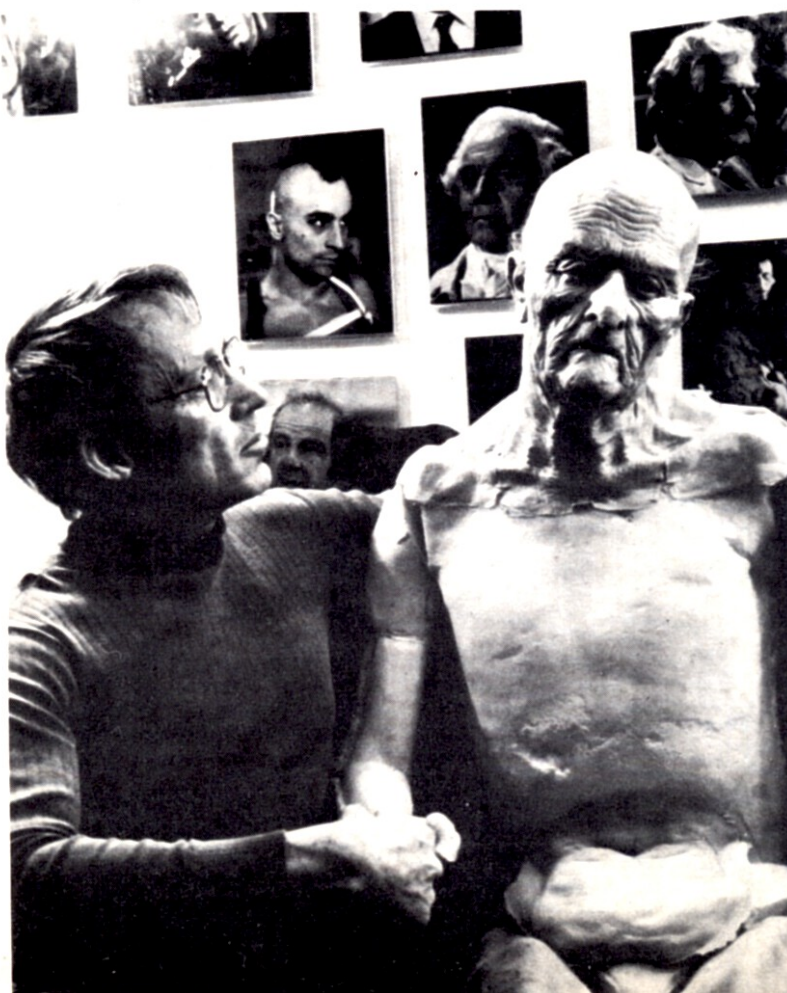
Although Miriam is forever young and beautiful, she is also lonely, with human acquaintances dying off after a few short decades. So she takes lovers, altering their very body chemistry so they can share—at least for a few centuries, anyway—her eternal youth, feeding together on human blood. But Miriam's lovers are still human, and their "Fountain of Youth" ultimately runs dry. Her lovers suddenly have an increased craving for blood, a hunger that increases in ferocity even as it decreases in its ability to fight off the ravages of time. In the end, Miriam's lovers simply wither away to bone and sinew—not really dead, but not quite alive, either.

With his prior experience in aging actors realistically—including Max Von Sydow in THE EXORCIST, Marlon Brando in THE GODFATHER and Dustin Hoffman in LITTLE BIG MAN—Smith was a likely choice to execute the various stages of aging needed for David Bowie and Deneuve, and the mummy-like forms that figure heavily in the film's violent ending.

In comparison to the crumbling mummies, David Bowie's multi-part appliance makeup was a cinch. Once Smith and director Tony Scott worked out the first point where appliances would be needed (when Bowie's character ages to about 55 years old), and the subsequent stages needed (60, 75, 90 and 150 years old), Smith was left on his own.

"What is unusual, and what is so intriguing about this job, is the whole marvelous progression," Smith explained. "It's one thing to get a 150-year-old makeup to do, but to lead up to it with a whole series of character makeups is quite an extraordinary event."

Dick Smith poses in his basement workshop with a dummy fitted with David Bowie's old-age makeup for THE HUNGER, including a belly pad and bony leg appliances.





Left: A former human lover of Miriam's who has withered away until only a mummy-like shell remains. Below: Carl Fullerton creates one of the seven, tailor-made mummy suits used for the film's climax. Foam latex was spread on a plastic dropcloth, placed directly onto a leotard, and wrinkles were molded by hand. After the latex had set, the dropcloth was peeled away. To make sure the suits would fit properly, mannequins were made from molds of each actor's body. Bottom: Fullerton works on a crumbling arm, designed to strap onto the mummy suits and break when weight is applied to it.





Bowie appears about his own age—mid 30s—throughout much of the film, and early stages of the aging progression were handled by the film's regular makeup artist. From 55 years old on up, a series of increasingly complicated appliance makeups were devised by Smith, culminating in a bald, lumpy head reminiscent of the makeup worn by Dustin Hoffman as the 121-year-old Indian in *LITTLE BIG MAN*. "Bowie's makeup doesn't look that much like Hoffman's," Smith said. "But when you get that old, the best thing that you can do is to have a guy virtually bald, and to have a lumpy, skull-like head. That im-

mediately makes them similar. Then, obviously, you're going to have a droopy nose, a caved-in mouth, and droopy eyelids. So all those things have a certain superficial similarity."

In addition to wearing appliances on his face and hands, Bowie wore contact lenses and a number of body appliances prepared by Smith, including belly pads, a large hump, and appliances that went on his thighs over the kneecap to give the impression of bony legs through his clothes. "I didn't want you to see Bowie's nice, full, round thigh," Smith explained. "Bowie, being a skier, has rather heavy

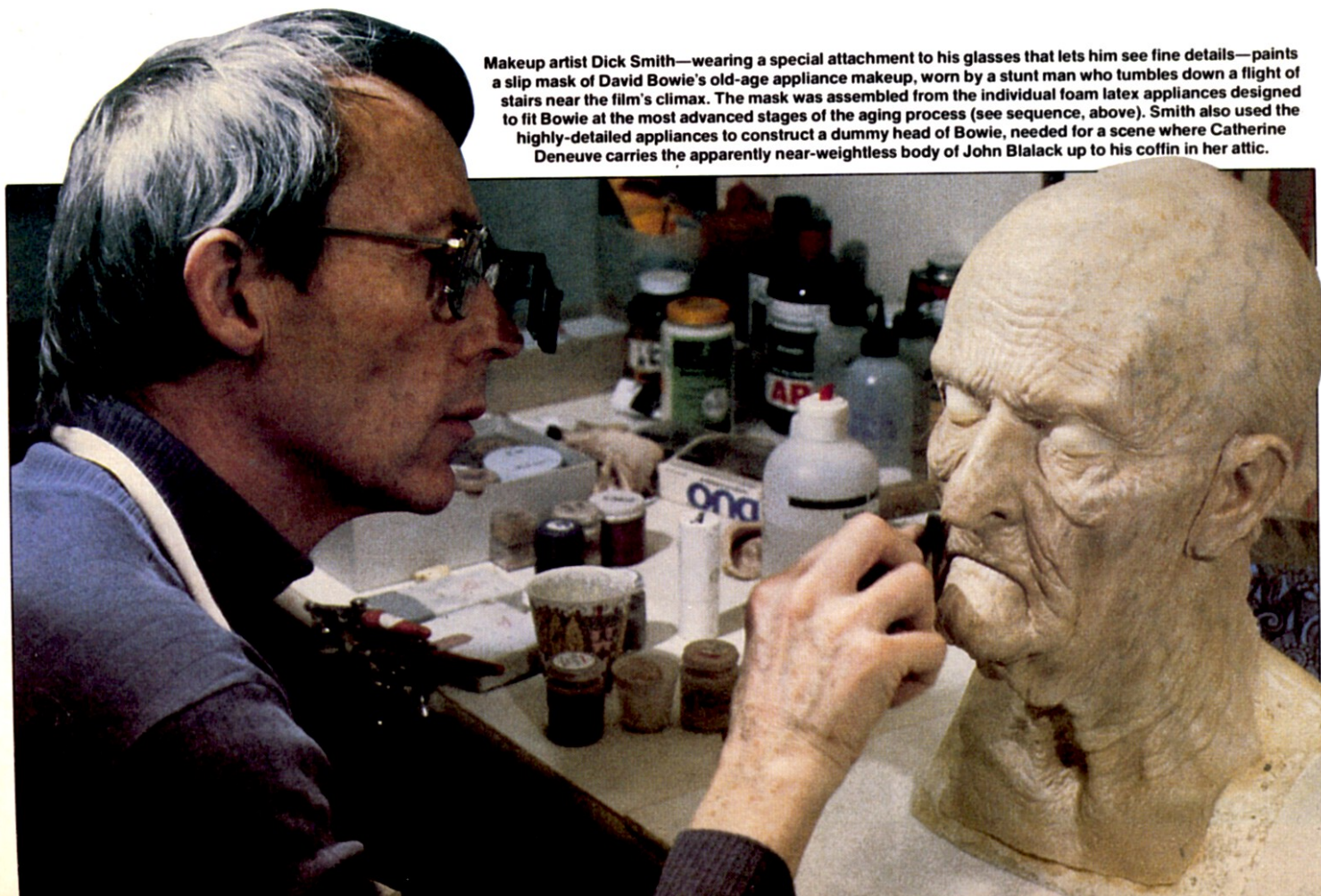
upper legs, so this helped camouflage that."

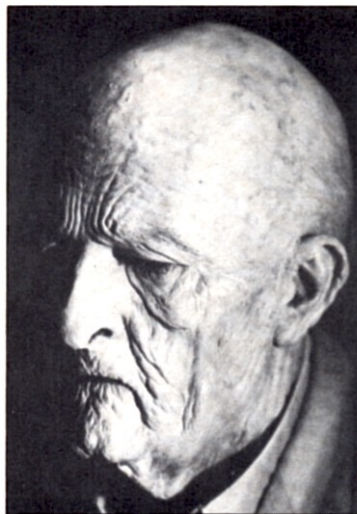
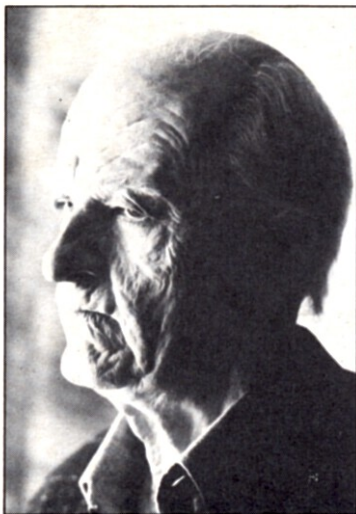
Smith does not have much directorial control over sequences involving his makeup effects (of active makeup artist, only Rob Bottin enjoys that type of power). Accordingly, he is frequently at the mercy of directors who call for last-minute changes in story and staging, resulting in weeks of lost labor and requiring him to improvise last-minute solutions. Such was nearly the case on *THE HUNGER*.

"The regular makeup artist called me up from England to tell me that Scott had told Bowie to let his beard grow for scenes when he's

approaching age 55," said Smith, who would have had to try and match the uneven stubble with his foam latex appliances. "To paste a stubble, or any beard, over appliances is a terribly difficult job if you do it conventionally. I immediately called the director and protested. If I had been on the spot I would have talked him out of it in the first place. I told Scott that I didn't know if I could do the makeups so he could take closeups. I said, 'Can't you work it into the plot so he shaves before he gets to the point where I have to put on appliances?' and he says, 'Yes, yes. I'll do it.'"

Makeup artist Dick Smith—wearing a special attachment to his glasses that lets him see fine details—paints a slip mask of David Bowie's old-age appliance makeup, worn by a stunt man who tumbles down a flight of stairs near the film's climax. The mask was assembled from the individual foam latex appliances designed to fit Bowie at the most advanced stages of the aging process (see sequence, above). Smith also used the highly-detailed appliances to construct a dummy head of Bowie, needed for a scene where Catherine Deneuve carries the apparently near-weightless body of John Blalock up to his coffin in her attic.





OLD AGE MAKEUPS for David Bowie lured Dick Smith into working on *THE HUNGER*. While Smith had executed old age makeups before—Brando in *THE GODFATHER*, for one—he felt the assignment offered a rare opportunity to create an entire series of character makeups, aging Bowie (from left to right) from his present age, to his mid-50s, to ages 60, 75, 90, and finally, 150. Each of the stages required different sets of appliances, which increased in number and complexity as the sequence progressed. Even the least obvious of the stages required old-age stipple around Bowie's eyes, a toupee, and appliances for his nose, jowls and neck. In all, Bowie spent two weeks in appliance makeups, a tiresome and often uncomfortable experience. "Bowie was very cooperative and good natured about the whole thing," Smith recalled. "He was always very patient."

Smith has been given such assurances before. Burned badly in such cases, he's learned not to take any chances. "I worked out a way to get around this, and it's a good thing," he said. "Scott never called me back, but when I got over there, he told me he couldn't figure out a logical reason to have Bowie shave, and so he didn't."

Smith's solution was based on his long-standing effort to keep conventional makeup—including rubber mask greasepaint, the standard makeup for latex appliances—from coming off on actors' clothing. "I had done some early work on Dustin Hoffman's makeups for *TOOTSIE* which involved that problem—he was going to be in a white nurse's uniform, originally—and I had found a couple of promising things. One was a new medical adhesive which I found was almost impossible to get off the skin. I combined it with artists' acrylic paint, and I found that I could make a paint which was tremendously tenacious."

After additional experimentation, Smith developed a paint that would work on latex appliances and could be applied directly to the skin, and which would readily accept standard adhesives used for gluing on beard stubble. "In fact, not only did it work well for this purpose, but it worked so well as a makeup that I no longer use rubber mask grease as a makeup for appliances. This is better!"

Like many of Smith's previous character makeups, the illusion of reality is striking, with painstakingly-blended appliances and carefully painted liver spots and other blemishes. Smith also credits Tony Scott and cinematographer Stephen Goldblatt with lighting the makeups with great care. "There's lots of backlighting and sidelighting that

helps appliance makeup enormously," Smith explained. "I was amazed that they even got some extremely tight closeups—including one of Bowie's eyes and cheeks at 75—that look absolutely real. What's more, Bowie was damn good in the old age stuff. I never quite expected that he'd be able to pull off acting 150 years old."

Smith was aided on *THE HUNGER* by a relatively large crew (at least by his standards), which included sculptor and moldmaker Neal Martz (*DEATH BITE*), who devised molds that fit together like a jigsaw puzzle; Kevin Haney, who sculpted the hands for both Bowie's makeups and the mummies; Peter Montagna, a young makeup artist with experience in television work; Doug Drexler; and Smith's son, David, who processed (or "ran") the final foam latex pieces and did lab work.

Smith also worked with Carl Fullerton, a highly talented artist who supervised makeup effects for *WOLFEN* and *FRIDAY THE 13TH—PART TWO*, and previously worked with Smith on *ALTERED STATES* and *GHOST STORY*. Among other tasks, Full-

erton took on the job of inventing a way to crumble a mummy on screen. "As we progressed in the early stages on that, I just backed out and let him do the whole thing while I concentrated on the other problems," Smith explained. "He did hundreds and hundreds of experiments, and it took too much of my time to keep up with what he was doing. I had to do my work, and he had his, and we divided it up that way."

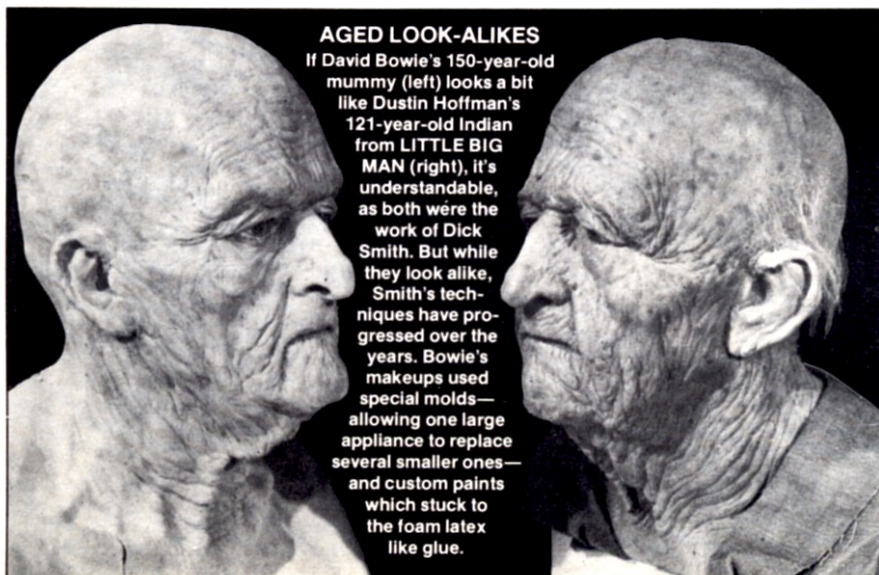
The mummies are former lovers of Miriam, who are stowed in heavy coffins in her attic. At the end of the film, seven of them escape and terrorize Miriam. The makeups were based upon the Guanojuato mummies, a tourist attraction of sorts in northern Mexico which was featured in the opening shots of *NOSFERATU*. The area is too rocky to dig conventional graves, so crypts and tombs have taken their place. When a family can't keep up the payments on a crypt, the dried-up body is removed and stored above ground. "Rooms and halls are lined with these old bodies, which are wired against the walls," said Smith, who was familiar with the mummies and suggested them to

Tony Scott as the proper approach to take. "They're very grotesque."

The sequence called for Miriam's former lovers to stagger from the confines of the attic to the top landing of a staircase, at which point they start to collapse and disintegrate. Smith realized the sequence called for a blend of full-body costumes and life-size puppets, but the real problem was devising a suitable material to use. "Originally, we thought of having an entire mummified figure crumble like a falling building," Smith said. "But you can't have a material that's so weak it will crumble with a breath of wind, and yet still be strong enough to support its own weight and hold itself up in the first place. To try and hit the happy medium made us limit our original objective."

The illusion was built up with careful cutting: actors in full-body mummy costumes would fall into a predetermined position, at which point a crumbling "puppet" would be inserted for close-ups. "The most complicated sequence featured a boy and girl mummy slumped into a corner of the room with the girl leaning on the boy's chest," Smith explained. "First you see the man's head crumbling down into his own chest—the face disintegrates—then the girl mummy swings her head over towards this action."

"To do this, we made an entire statue of the man's body with a section in the chest that could crumble away," Smith continued. "The head was on a piston that lowered it into the proper area. The face itself was rigged to collapse. Then the actress inside the girl's mummy suit was replaced by a dummy that represented her figure, and her head was rigged to disintegrate. Then they went to a leg disintegrating, and so forth."



AGED LOOK-ALIKES

If David Bowie's 150-year-old mummy (left) looks a bit like Dustin Hoffman's 121-year-old Indian from *LITTLE BIG MAN* (right), it's understandable, as both were the work of Dick Smith. But while they look alike, Smith's techniques have progressed over the years. Bowie's makeups used special molds—allowing one large appliance to replace several smaller ones—and custom paints which stuck to the foam latex like glue.

WHITLEY STRIEBER ON

The Novel

One summer day in 1966, during his days as a student at the University of Texas, novelist Whitley Strieber found himself in the middle of one of life's true horror stories—the day Charles Whitman went into a tower on the University's campus and began shooting people at random.

Hiding behind a wall near the tower, Strieber experienced the tragedy at close range. It has continued to haunt him all his life.

Today, Strieber is making a career out of horror stories of a more fanciful nature, twisting the standard conventions of the horror genre and placing his stories in settings as real and frightening as the U.T. sidewalks of 17 years ago.

A filmmaker turned advertising man turned novelist, Strieber's first published novel, *The Wolfen* (1977), was one of the more original variations on the werewolf theme. His second, *The Hunger* (1981), was a vampire story with a difference: there were no "vampires," at least in the classic sense. Instead, the book proposed a rational, pseudo-scientific justification of the vampire myth: a near-immortal species which has lived alongside *homo sapien* since the beginning of recorded history.

"I had been reading a lot of vampire novels, and I wanted to write one," said Strieber, who made underground films in London during the late '60s. "I wanted to get something out of my system about vampires. I've had a hard time convincing myself that vampires—or something like them—don't actually exist. I did a little bit of research on the subject and found a thriving group of people out on Long Island who believe, very seriously, that they are vampires! They even publish a little newsletter. I think most of them died of hepatitis from drinking too much raw blood."

While compiling his research, Strieber had a few frightening encounters with the modern-day blood-suckers, which was enough to crystallize the idea of the book in his mind. The bulk of his research was more conventional—tracing the roots of the vampire myth in Western literature. The trail led to the Lamia, a mythological figure with the head of a woman and the body of a serpent. "In many ways, the Lamia was

more revealing to me than modern notions of the vampire," Strieber explained. "She was the dark side of motherhood—the opposite of a mother. Instead of bringing children forth, she devoured them. That's what Miriam is, in a sense—the opposite of what we ourselves hope to be. She is the violent side of us. Like Lamia—which is her mother's name—she lives forever while we die."

Though Strieber looked back at Greek myths, he based the story in present-day New York City, relying on current advances in medical technology for the film's premise: to save her rapidly-aging lover (played in the film by David Bowie), Miriam (Catherine Deneuve) must enlist the aid of a scientist (Susan Sarandon) involved in research on aging.

"The science in the book is fairly up to date," Strieber said proudly. "We are actually going to be facing

the issue of greatly expanded lifetimes before the end of the century, assuming there's no war. The scientists who have been treating aging as a *disease* have made tremendous strides. They routinely can keep mice alive the equivalent of 150 mouse-years. It won't be long before the same things will be possible with humans.

"The frightening thing about such a prospect is that it's liable to put a lot of people in the perfectly *horrible* position of being forced to *choose* death when the time comes," he added. "There may be profound personal and ethical questions involved in something like that. What do you *do* with immortality? How could someone who had only one or two possibilities for dying of natural causes be able to get into a car? Or fly in an airplane? Or, ultimately, sleep at night?"

Miriam shares these fears of

Strieber's. Because although Miriam is nearly immortal, she is far from invulnerable, a point emphasized in the revised ending to the story.

In fact, the effects-heavy climax of the film is one of the few cases in which James Costigan's screenplay strays from the pacing and plot elements of the novel. Strieber's ending—in

which Miriam survives to take a new lover—was more subtle, but perhaps a bit less cinematic. Though most writers would naturally prefer to see their work adapted with as few changes as possible, Strieber concedes that *some* changes were for the better.

"The book has been enriched in certain ways," Strieber said. "I think a lot of the dialogue is, if anything, better than the dialogue in the book. As for the ending, if I had it to do over again, I wouldn't have ended it the same way that I did."

Although Strieber had not seen the film at the time of this interview, he's optimistic he won't be as disappointed as he was while watching Michael Wadleigh's *WOLFEN*. "That film was re-conceived as a 'message' movie," Strieber noted. "It became a political film telling the director's philosophy. If Wadleigh had wanted to do that, he should have chosen another kind of script to do. Audiences don't go to see horror films to be politically motivated—they go to be entertained. But I must say that in spite of the problems with the script and the fundamental misconception of the nature of horror films, Wadleigh almost pulled it off."

"As for *THE HUNGER*," Strieber continued, "the writer was much more cognizant of horror movies. The scares in it are related directly to Miriam and to the issue of vampires, whereas in *WOLFEN* there are a lot of arbitrary scares that don't build up."

To make sure the scares all pointed in the proper direction, Strieber had hoped to play an active role in the film's development. However, as was the case for *WOLFEN*, he ended up sitting helplessly on the sidelines. "I must say I'm rather surprised that the people on the film chose to use me as little as they did," said Strieber, whose only real contribution to the project was suggesting Catherine Deneuve for the role of Miriam. "There was almost no consultation at all, except to give me the first draft of the script and listen to what I had to say about it. I've never even met the director. I've been kept very far away, and to do that with a novelist who is as familiar with film as I am is a shame [Strieber worked as a production assistant on *THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT*, *THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS* and *DIARY OF A MAD HOUSEWIFE*]."

"I suppose people feel that novelists would not necessarily be professional enough, that there's no real place for the novelist in the creative mix," he added. "There's a lot to be said for that attitude. I might have said it myself if I was directing, but since I'm the novelist, I wish I had* had more say in it!" **Paul R. Gagne**

Novelist Whitley Strieber in downtown New York.



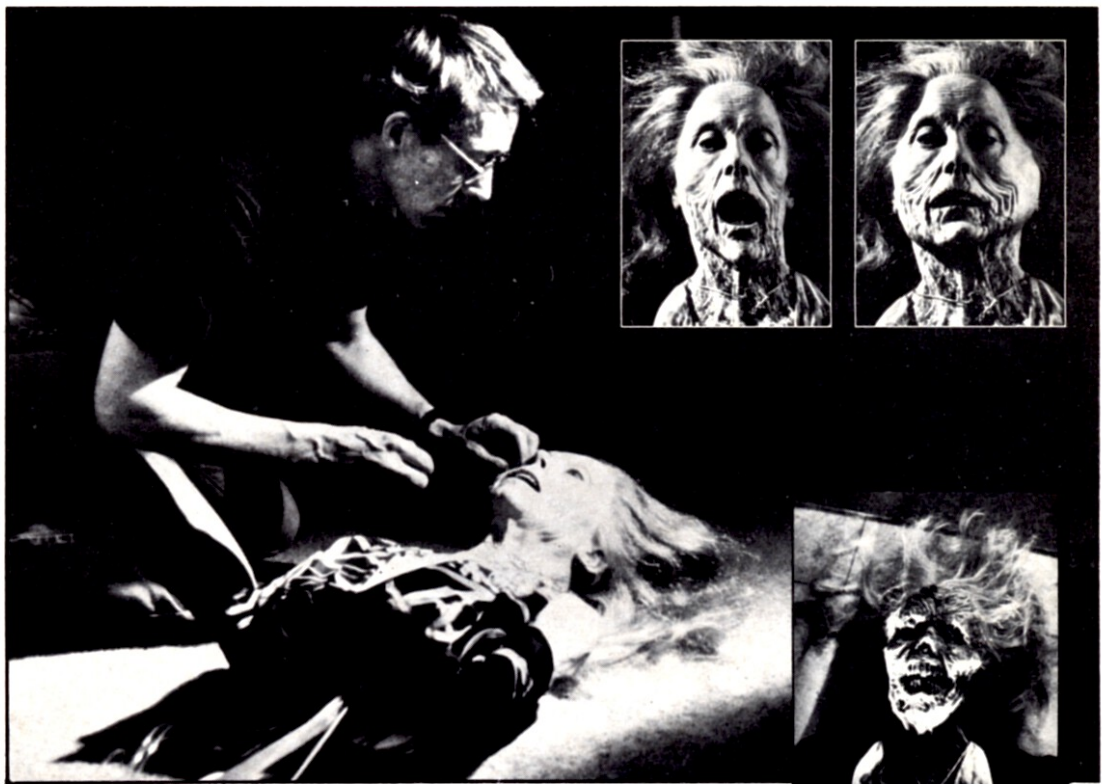
To make the mummies seem as wraithlike as possible, Smith originally anticipated using puppets and articulated mechanics for the bulk of the shots, and reserving actors in costumes for extreme long shots. Based on Tony Scott's hand-drawn storyboards, it seemed the simplest solution. But while casting the skinny people to fit inside the mummy suits, Smith asked Scott to shoot Polaroids of the actors in the poses he'd want to later capture on film. "It was interesting," Smith said, "because he was shooting much looser and doing things that were not in his storyboards. I eliminated the mechanical approach and went entirely for mummy suits even though, obviously, you can't make them as scrawny and emaciated as the true mummies of Guanojuato. It's a good thing I used this approach, because Tony changed his plan and choreography, and if we had used mechanical figures we would have been lost. But with the moody lighting, they looked bloody skinny in them, so it worked out okay."

Smith, of course, still used "puppets" for shots in which a mummy had to actually disintegrate. Operating the appliances before the camera was simple: In one shot a fragile appliance was simply dropped to the floor; more often, thin cables were attached to a superstructure on the inside of an appliance and pulled inward. Much harder was making sure the materials wouldn't crumble *until* they got to the set.

It took hundreds of experiments for Carl Fullerton to find just the right material. He finally stumbled across a batch of foam latex that had been improperly mixed by the manufacturer, with the result that it baked up weak, porous and crumbly. Fortunately, the manufacturer was able to reconstruct the formula, and supply Smith and Fullerton with all the foam they needed.

"The trouble was that it wouldn't get any detail in the mold," Smith said. "In order to get a surface detail which would be close to the rubber mummy suits [built up with foam latex, cotton wads and pre-formed latex ribcages attached to a stretch leotard], Fullerton melted a very brittle wax with microballoons, which look like dust but are actually tiny globes of glass, which made the wax lighter, porous and more crumbly."

Fullerton added baking soda and vinegar to the hot wax and brushed the mixture into the mold to capture tiny details. The crumbly, rigid polyurethane foam was then added to fill up the mold. "This stuff was so delicate that you couldn't extract these things from the molds without breaking them," Smith explained, "so the molds had to be very special." The molds were built in three layers, with a



Above: Dick Smith touches up an articulated puppet head of Catherine Deneuve, used to show her sudden, violent aging. The puppet featured a flexible skull which could be radically distorted (insets top). Seven operators were needed control the various cables, bladders and mechanical controls required. A second puppet head, less complicated to operate, was also built to film the latter stages of Deneuve's disintegration (right).

soft flexible lining backed with stiffer materials. The outer layer was made of conventional plaster, but designed so it could be disassembled in pieces without putting any stress on the inner layers.

"You could get out the fine details this way, but the pieces were so crumbly that you have to handle them with kid gloves," Smith explained. The procedure was so delicate, in fact, that Smith found it necessary to ship the molds to England, where the filming took place, rather than shipping finished pieces. More than 50 crates—including many with the molds already filled with Fullerton's crumbling mixture—were freighted to Shepperton Studios.

Originally, Smith was to have spent about two weeks at Shepperton filming a variety of postproduction makeup effects. But director Tony Scott's reluctance to compromise his artistic standards delayed the completion of principal photography, and MGM—nervous about the first-time director and the already healthy budget—refused to provide the extra funds now needed to shoot the postproduction effects. "Tony Scott was one of those chaps who is quite oblivious to practical considerations," Smith explained. "He was far more concerned with getting everything exactly the way he wanted it—which was admirable, except he was running out of time."

"We went through at least a week or so of agony where MGM and

producer Richard Shepherd were threatening to pull the plug and just stop on a Friday, when we would not have done even half of the work that we had prepared," Smith added. "It looked like a very serious threat, although I don't think Scott really believed it could happen. I was terrified. Finally, they relented and gave him three extra days, so we were able to get virtually everything on film. We didn't have as many tries as we would have liked to have had on some effects, and there was one shot in particular, of a full-figure dummy of Catherine Deneuve, that was not well-photographed and not well-rigged."

After viewing the shot at dailies, Smith asked to shoot the sequence again. However, Shepherd announced that there was neither time nor money left to have a second crack. "Chances are it'll go by so fast it won't be crucial," Smith said. "I'm thankful that at least ninety percent of the work will look good."

Effects involving the principal actors were completed first. This allowed the key cast members to wrap up their work on the project more or less on time, but it left many of the most complicated effects shots for the very end, including the death and disintegration of Miriam, played by Deneuve.

Although Miriam has lived for centuries, she is not invulnerable. When the mummies break loose from her attic, Miriam is startled,

crashes through the bannister and falls two stories to land on a marble hallway. Finding a suitable way to depict her death proved to be one of Smith's most difficult challenges. The script mentioned only that Miriam was to suddenly age and turn hideous, leaving room for wide interpretation.

The disintegration was designed to be filmed as a series of brief cuts, requiring a mixture of articulated mechanics and makeup effects. The first shot showed Miriam sprawled on the floor, her skirt hiked high over her attractive legs, which suddenly begin to shrivel up. "We had to engineer shriveling legs," Smith said, "which were far more complicated than the shriveling arm we had to do for *ALTERED STATES* [see 11:1:17]. We used a plastic skeleton for the leg bone and hollow foam latex legs connected and blended into a fiberglass hip." The legs are inflated like a balloon; when two large vacuum motors removed the air, the legs simply shriveled up.

"When foam latex is sucked in like that, it tends to create long, even folds and pleats," Smith remarked. "We wanted something that looked a little more organic, so Carl Fullerton rigged in a number of cables that would pull in portions of the foam latex in ways that would prevent even folds from forming."

After a shot of wrinkled hands—an elderly woman whose hands were touched up with old age stipple makeup—the film cuts to a head

shot, involving the first of two dummy heads built and designed by Smith. "She was supposed to end up as some withered, horrible thing," Smith said. "But my concept was that she *wouldn't* wind up looking like one of the mummies of Guanojuato. Those are *human beings* that have gotten old. But she's another creature altogether, and I felt that she should be as monstrous and evil-looking a thing as possible."

Smith toyed with a number of concepts, combining elements of werewolves, vampires and the Elephant Man. In one early plan, Smith thought Miriam's face should suddenly split open to reveal a hideous, stark-looking creature—Miriam's true self. Smith based the creature on a medical photo of a woman whose face had been horribly burned away. "She had two globs where the eyes were, no nose, no lips, but her teeth were still there," Smith said. "She had this toothy, snarling skull-like look, yet it's not really a skull. My idea was that this would burst forth, and it would then decompose further and get *really* ancient."

Scott wasn't impressed, rejecting both the creature's design and the idea of it appearing from inside of Miriam (a prescient decision, considering similar effects later appeared in *THE BEAST WITHIN*, *CAT PEOPLE* and *AMITYVILLE II*). The director simply wanted Miriam to get very old, with the added twist that he wanted to see the aging on camera through a series of sudden, violent changes. "Scott wanted a tight close-up on one eye, and then to see the eye undergo changes—wrinkles appearing around the eye, the eye getting bloodshot and so forth," Smith explained. "But most of these things were just not possible, particularly in the limited time

that we had."

While advances in makeup technology have allowed actors to transform into monsters on camera, no one has yet figured out a way to have normal-looking skin wrinkle in a realistic way on a realistic face while on camera. Smith experimented with a number of techniques, "but they were just not good enough so I abandoned that kind of gimmick," he said. "It will be done someday, but I still don't know how."

Smith, however, was able to engineer a *limited* wrinkling effect, though it won't be seen in the final film. He sculpted a thin foam latex "skin" with wrinkles already in it, and then stretched it smooth using air bladders and a plunger-like device that thrust out a "cheekbone." As the bladder and plunger went down, the wrinkles would appear.

"Obviously you couldn't do that for an entire face," Smith said. "You *could* take a huge, bloated face and let it collapse so that it turned into a prune. But having the skin wrinkle up and age in a realistic way is totally baffling."

Smith wanted to use the on-camera wrinkling as a segue between two of the head-and-shoulder puppets used to show Miriam's aging—the first featured an old, but relatively lifelike face; the second (featuring the wrinkling cheekbone) was more extremely aged, somewhat like the Guanojuato mummies. "My idea was to have a close-up of one section of the face and work the wrinkling effect," Smith explained. "Then the shot would widen to include the whole head, which already had wrinkles sculpted into it."

Scott had different thoughts on the staging of the sequence, and chose not to use Smith's wrinkling cheek. Smith was also a bit disap-

pointed in the way Scott photographed the heads, which could be distorted on camera through a unique blend of mechanics and flexible materials. "Instead of building the skull structure out of the usual rigid fiberglass, I made it from a firm urethane rubber, so that the skull itself could be distorted," Smith explained. "By running cables from points on the skull to a central post, you could make sides of the head cave in. It was an interesting effect, because by teaming up a couple of cables—the left temple and right jaw, for example—it twisted the head."

The puppet featured moving eyes, a working mouth, full movement of the neck and head, and a number of conventional bladders working in concert with the flexible skull. Seven people were needed to operate it, and with a little rehearsal were able to put the head through its paces. But Scott wasn't as interested in the built-in mechanics as he was in the image of Miriam's hair whipping back and forth, slowed to a dream-like appearance by overcranking the camera. But slowing down the hair slowed down the movements of the skull to the point where they were hardly noticed.

"It was discouraging," Smith admitted. "Overcranking was interesting when we were doing a crumbling head that was breaking up, where you wanted to slow down the action of something that you physically couldn't slow down. But in the case of the heads, where we could control the speeds of all these actions exactly, it only meant he was defeating the effect we were achieving. Whipping the head around as fast as we could and then slowing down the motion of the hair *was* interesting and gorgeous to look at, but this was not why we made the head. I had to

remind him that the head was made to create the illusion that Miriam was changing; that she was going through a metamorphosis.

"Eventually we got some sequences on film shot at normal speed where you could see these distortions happening," Smith added. "I just hope that in the editing, he went for those and doesn't just stick with the ones he thought were more 'arty.' There were some wonderful profile shots where it was back lit and the hair was whipping around in this wonderful halo effect, but there's *no effect* happening, just a lot of movement."

Though he disagreed with the staging of several of the cuts involving Miriam, Smith was especially disappointed with the final shot of the sequence, involving a full-figure dummy. "Even though we had showed Miriam's legs shriveling right up to her ass, Scott wanted the negligee she was wearing to be pinned down to her knees," Smith said. "Here we made this entire mummified figure, and we're hiding more than half of it!

"Because of our time pressures, we had not put many controls in the figure," Smith continued. "It was meant, of course, to be seen on a full-figure shot. When we got to England and rigged this thing, we ran some control rods and cables through the floor in order to make it flop around. That was only half-satisfactory. The pressures that we were under gave us virtually no time to refine it and do as much with it as we should have. Also, it had black silk stockings on, and from a long shot it hid the shriveled legs. You didn't see *through* them that well. There were so many things that just didn't work out, and the last figure should have been truly hideous. But that's the way it goes."

As a makeup artist, Smith knows that he's paid to please the director. But as an artist with nearly 40 years of experience in the industry, he has strong opinions on the best way to utilize makeup and makeup effects. This has occasionally led to conflicts with a film's director, and *THE HUNGER* was no exception.

"I suppose I enjoyed working with Scott as much as I have with any director," Smith said. "He was a remarkably amicable fellow to work with. He *never* got angry, even when I got cross and lost my temper. I disagreed with his interpretation on a number of things, and I have some troubles with some inconsistent and illogical moments in the script. I again stuck my two cents in a couple of times and tried to make suggestions for changes that I felt would make it more sensible, but they never had time to futz with it.

"But in all, I think Scott has done a terrific job," Smith added. "It's definitely far superior to what we consider the usual 'horror' film. It's a real quality job." □

Smith's son, David, separates sections of a mold used to create full-scale, foam latex legs modeled after Catherine Deneuve's. A powerful vacuum sucked the air out of the legs, causing them to shrivel and collapse—the start of Deneuve's transformation.





DAVE ALLEN ON

The Monkey

Although Dick Smith was hired to create a variety of old-age effects for *THE HUNGER*, a startling sequence involving a caged laboratory animal was farmed out to stop-motion animator Dave Allen.

In the scene, a Rhesus monkey suddenly goes berserk, savagely attacking his mate. Without warning, he collapses and begins to age rapidly—his skin drying and splitting, and his organs shrinking away—until all that's left is a withered skeleton that crumbles to dust.

"Smith suggested me because he felt the specific actions required of the monkeys weren't things that either a real monkey or mechanical monkey could do," said Allen, who handled stop-motion effects for *CAVEMAN* and recently contributed several cuts to George Miller's segment of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*.

Allen originally had planned to animate the entire sequence, but soon changed his mind. "I felt that animating the fighting monkeys was going to be very difficult, and the producer and director weren't going to be very happy with it."

Instead, Allen contacted Roger Dicken to build articulated hand puppets to be photographed in real-time (Dicken built similar puppets for *ALIEN* and *DRAGON-SLAYER*). The scene was filmed at Allen's Burbank facility, on a set built to match the one used in the London studio—complete with real monkeys on hand as "extras."

"The problem with real monkeys is that it was difficult to get anything dramatic out of them," Allen explained. "They weren't the least bit aggressive. But they were helpful in establishing themselves doing things

real animals do—walking around, grooming themselves—things that are so hard to reproduce artificially. When the fight begins and we go to quick cuts using our puppets, the puppets will seem real, too."

For shots involving the rapid aging and disintegration, one of Allen's biggest problems was simply finding a real Rhesus skeleton to work from.

"I thought they were as common as lab mice," he said. "Actually, they are no longer being shipped over from India, so many labs have switched to other types of monkeys."

Allen finally located a specimen, but it was neither the right size nor in premium condition. "The man I got it from had left it lying out in the field for weeks," he recalled. "It was sort of a mummy. But, it already had something of the look I wanted for the film, so we took some photos of it before we got the bones out."

For the early stages in the aging process, a slightly modified version of the actual skeleton was used, covered with internal organs made of urethane and a foam latex skin. For the disintegration of the skeleton, the real bones were replaced with a brittle compound called Gyp-Sno, which crumbles easily under pressure.

Allen filmed both a close-up of the monkey's face (sequence, right) and a long shot of the complete puppet in various stages of disintegration (top). For the close-up, the puppet was designed to accept several faces—sculpted to show various stages of aging—and the shot was filmed using a series of in-camera dissolves. A soft-edged matte was used to replace one face with another, or to allow subtle modifications of color and texture. Since the

Above: A Rhesus monkey disintegrates, part of a sequence executed by animator Dave Allen. Real monkey bones were used as a basis for the puppet. Right: An early stage of the aging process, featuring near-imperceptible dissolves between variously-aged monkey faces.

body of the puppet remained the same, the dissolve is nearly impossible to detect.

To show the skin peeling back, Allen inserted a thin sheet of lead between layers of foam latex skin. "It was just a matter of collapsing the lead, and deciding at what point to cut it so that it could be peeled back like dried skin."

To show the monkey's innards shrinking, Allen warmed them with a heat gun and butane torch, making the urethane shrivel and crinkle. At one point, he nearly set the puppet on fire, saving it with a glass of water he had on hand to cool his fingers.

Late in postproduction, Allen was dismayed to learn that the Rhesus sequence had been heavily edited and modified by director Tony Scott. Several cuts Allen felt were necessary to set up the disintegration were eliminated, and one seven-second shot was optically lengthened, affecting its pacing.

Although Allen hasn't seen the finished cut, he was warned by producer Richard Shepherd that he wouldn't be very happy. "The optical people in England apparently said the sequence couldn't be made to work as filmed," Allen said. "It seems to be a sign that you're on a big-budget picture when they don't use your work or throw out half of what you do."

"In any event," he continued, "I hope they'll be some interesting moments."

Kay Anderson







OF PRECOCIOUS PIGS, SINGING CABBAGES, AND A LITTLE GREEN FROG NAMED KERMIT

THE STORY OF JIM HENSON & THE MUPPETS

BY JUDITH P. HARRIS

Puppet master Jim Henson is flanked by an assortment of his Muppets (clockwise from top left): Zoot, the sax player of the "Electric Mayhem"; an unnamed two-headed monster, one of the thousands of assorted creatures that make up the Muppet universe; Dr. Teeth, the "Mayhem's" keyboard player; and, of course, Kermit the Frog.

Jen and Kira, last of the Gelflings, were born in a Washington, D.C., television studio in 1953. So was Kermit the Frog. So was Miss Piggy. And so were Gonzo, Grover, Animal, Gobo, and Bert and Ernie, as well.

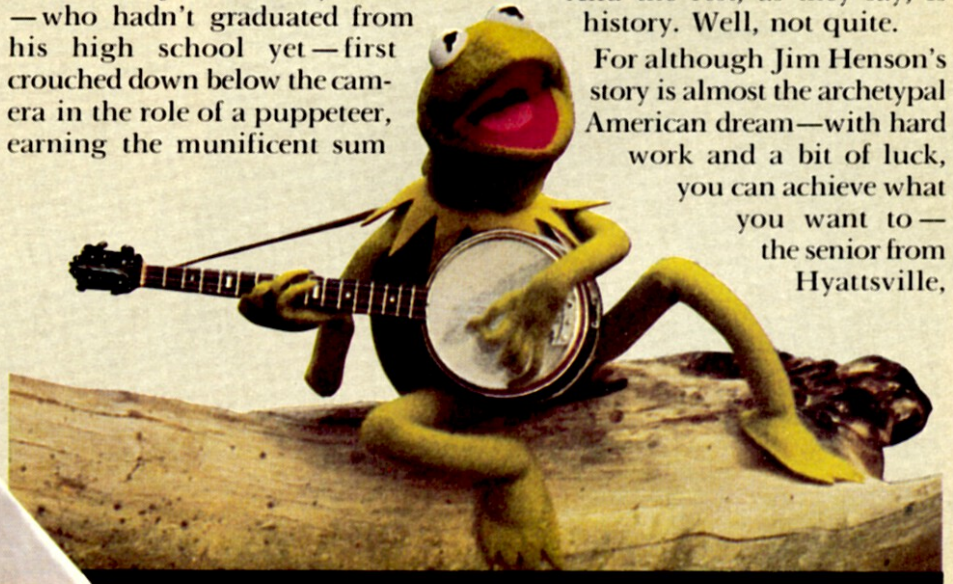
Their "father" was a 16-year-old art student who had a dream of making it big in the burgeoning field of television. And the occasion of their "birth" was an early morning kiddie show which was cancelled three weeks after its first broadcast—hardly the stuff of which legends are made.

But it was in that small, cluttered studio that James Maury Henson — who hadn't graduated from his high school yet—first crouched down below the camera in the role of a puppeteer, earning the munificent sum

of \$5 for each show.

And the rest, as they say, is history. Well, not quite.

For although Jim Henson's story is almost the archetypal American dream—with hard work and a bit of luck, you can achieve what you want to—the senior from Hyattsville,



A SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY OF JIM HENSON'S 30-YEAR CAREER



It would be nearly impossible to list all the times that the Muppets have appeared on variety shows, specials and talk shows. Therefore, the following represents the highlights of a remarkable career in which Henson and the Muppets have altered the course of puppetry. **Rowlf (left) was created for a dog food ad, and soon became a familiar TV guest-star.**

1953 THE JUNIOR MORNING SHOW, a children's show in Washington, D.C. was Henson's first on-the-air job. The show lasted three weeks.

1955 SAM AND FRIENDS [NBC; through 1962] Henson's own five-minute, late-night show, in which Muppets lip-sync to popular comedy records. Despite acclaim and awards, Henson isn't particularly nostalgic about the show. "It's embarrassingly bad," he now insists. "It's not something of which I'm creatively proud."



Will and Wont, the stars of a series of award-winning commercials for Wilkins Coffee prepared by Henson in the late '50s.

1956 THE STEVE ALLEN SHOW [NBC-TV]. The Muppets make

their network debut with Kermit (in a blonde wig) singing "I've Grown Accus-

son never *wanted* to be a puppeteer. Back in high school, Henson had designed scenery for school plays, drawn cartoons for the school paper, and even acted a bit. But fool around with puppetry? Not a chance.

"I was never interested in puppetry, never had puppets, never played with puppets, or *anything* like that," explained the 46-year-old Henson, sitting in a Chicago hotel suite during an early promotional appearance for *THE DARK CRYSTAL*. "I just wanted to work at television when I got out of high school. And puppets were just a way to get into TV."

Henson's entree into television was a live children's program, *THE JUNIOR MORNING SHOW*, which just happened to be looking for a puppeteer. Henson, whose closest brush to puppets to that point was building sets for the high school puppet club, landed the job.

"I got books out from the library to see how to make the puppets," he recalled. "But mostly I evolved my own type of construction, which I think is the reason the stuff looked somewhat different. I pretty much started from nowhere."

He may have started from scratch, but in the intervening 30 years Hen-

son has ended up revolutionizing both the art and science of puppetry, pushing the form to new heights of popularity and sophistication.

But in the beginning, Henson was merely content with making enough money to put him through the University of Maryland. His variety act—which soon moved to his own, late-night show on the NBC affiliate called *SAM AND FRIENDS*—involved abstract puppets lip-syncing to novelty songs and comedy records. The name of Henson's act: *The Muppets*.

"We were just experimenting," Henson explained. "It was just stuff that I did as a lark, you know? I did this as a way of working my way through school."

Henson originally enrolled as an art major, but his freshman puppetry teacher persuaded him to switch from fine arts—where math and science were required—to Home Economics, which included courses in costume design, interior design, advertising and, yes, puppetry. It was in that class that Henson met his future wife, Jane Nebel, whom he asked to help work

on *SAM AND FRIENDS*.

"It was just a little musical interlude," Henson said of the live, five-minute broadcasts. "It was a tiny show—just my wife and I. Jane and I would build everything and do the puppets, and she was also a performer. It was a strange little show. Now and then we'd do peculiar things that the college crowd would like."

The cast of *SAM AND FRIENDS* included Sam, Yorick (sort of a purple skull), Moldy Hay, and an abstract green lizardy thing named Kermit, who was created in 1956 from a green coat (Henson's mother's) and some ping pong balls. The show's humor and gentle satire gave it a sizable following, and its success led to additional appearances on the local NBC affiliate, often as many as three a day. Henson was put under contract for \$100 a week, which included his costs for puppets, costumes and sets.

"It seemed like an astronomical amount," Henson recalled. "But I was a kid and it was fun. And there wasn't much money in television in those days, anyhow."

The big money—then, as now—was in advertising, and Henson jumped on the bandwagon with short spots for Wilkins coffee, a local brand. Although Henson had done some voices on TV prior to this, the witty commercials—the first to run at the 10-second station break—provided the first real opportunity for the Muppets to talk. "The commercials were an immediate hit and they made a big impact," said Henson, who both wrote and performed the spots. "In terms of popularity, we were the number one commercial in Washington."

The coffee commercials depicted a salesman named Will, and his reluctant target, the triangular Wont. Since Henson didn't like coffee—and couldn't, in good conscience, simply say "Drink this coffee"—he substituted off-beat humor for hard sell, in what was to become a Muppet trademark. One award-winning commercial featured two cans of coffee—a can of Wil-

kins, and one labeled "cheap stuff." When the "cheap stuff" was opened, two small birds popped out and went "Cheep! cheep!" The punch line was that the non-Wilkins brand was "for the birds." Get it? So did lots of coffee buyers.

The success of the spots—sales rose an estimated 30 percent—prompted the ad agency to syndicate the commercials to other coffee makers across the country. Soon, Henson bought out the contract and began creating and syndicating the ads himself, an example of the creative control he now exercises over the entire Muppet empire. The commercials meant fame and a small fortune for Henson, who was still just a student at the University of Maryland.

With the ads and the ongoing success of *SAM AND FRIENDS*—which won a local Emmy award in 1958—Henson appeared to have the world at his feet. But something, somehow, seemed to be missing for him. He wanted to be a painter, an *artist*, and puppeteering had never been more than a mildly interesting—albeit economically-rewarding—sidelight.

And so, years before the "me generation" made dropping out in, Henson left for a three-month stint in Europe to "go off and paint." He left behind Jane ("It was before we were romantically connected," Henson said) and long-time friend Bob Payne to run *SAM AND FRIENDS*. It actually looked as if Henson was ready to pull the plug on his burgeoning career.

But Henson discovered something in his travels that he never expected to find, something he had never seen before: other puppeteers.

"One of the first things I saw was a puppet play of *Dr. Faustus*, in Belgium," Henson said. "It was very strong. And it was just gorgeous."

In America, puppets had been largely restricted to appearances in novelty acts, along the lines of *SAM AND FRIENDS*. But in Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and France, Henson was exposed to the proud tradition of puppetry. Instead of gags, Henson saw *theater*. And instead of an easy buck, Henson saw the possibilities of *art*.

"For the first time," he said, "puppetry seemed something valid, something you could work at. For the first



A family portrait, circa 1956, featuring the cast of *SAM AND FRIENDS* (from left): Yorick, Kermit, Jim Henson, Sam, Jane Nebel, Harry (with glasses) and Moldy Hay.

tomed to Your Face," to Yorick, a skull-like puppet who ate his own face. "We took a very straight piece and just did something rather bizarre with it," said Jane Henson. "We didn't realize how bizarre it must have seemed to network audiences seeing the characters for the first time."

1963 THE JIMMY DEAN SHOW

[ABC-TV; 60 mins., through 1966] featured Rowlf as a regular character. The canine piano player proved so popular he received as much fan mail as Jimmy Dean.

1965 TIMEPIECE [Pathé Contemporary, 9 mins.] An experimen-



Jimmy Dean and Rowlf.

tal, live-action theatrical short produced, directed and featuring Henson, originally screened with A MAN AND A WOMAN. It ran for about a year and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Subject, as well as receiving several international film festival awards.

1967 OUR PLACE SHOW [CBS-TV, July-Sept. '67].

The 60-minute comedy/variety show featured Rowlf as one of the regular guest stars. Hosts were Jack Burns and Avery Schreiber.

1968 YOUTH '68 [NBC-TV].

Part of the network's "Experiment in Television" series. The 60-minute documentary, produced by Henson, was a collage of dance, pop music and interviews.

THE CUBE [NBC-TV]

was a 60-minute surreal teleplay starring improvisational actor Richard Schall. His second project for NBC's "Experiment in Television," Henson produced, directed and co-wrote the program with then-Sesame Street writer Jerry Juhl.



Jim Henson dons wings for TIME PIECE, his theatrical short.

time, I saw all the really interesting things that were being done with puppets on an adult level."

When Henson returned to Maryland, he brought back a new admiration and respect for puppets. He married Jane Nebel. He set up his first company, Muppets Inc. And he finally graduated from college, driving to the ceremony in an old Rolls Royce he bought with the money the Muppets had earned. But more importantly, he began to alter the direction of his career, expanding his material to include characters mouthing their own dialogue, rather than simply miming to records.

Henson also began to seek out his American contemporaries. In 1960, at a Puppetry Festival in Detroit, Henson met Don Sahlin, who was working for puppeteer Burr Tillstrom (KUKLA, FRAN & OLLIE). Henson hired Sahlin to build the first non-abstract Muppets, a couple of dogs for a TV commercial.

At the next year's festival—in Carmel, California—Henson met Jerry Juhl and 17-year-old Frank Ozowitz, members of Oakland's Vaga-

bond Puppet Theatre. Henson hadn't gone to Carmel looking to hire anyone, but ended up hiring Juhl to take some of the production load off of Jane, who was pregnant at the time. Henson also asked Ozowitz to join him, but the young puppeteer (who later shortened his name to Oz) declined. But two years later, shortly after Henson moved to New York (and into the same apartment building as Burr Tillstrom), Oz joined the Muppet ranks.

Though more than 20 years have passed, Henson's closest associates have remained the same: Juhl, Oz and the late Don Sahlin became the Muppets' key writer, performer and designer, respectively.

The early '60s were an exciting period for Henson, with appearances by the Muppets on THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW, THE JACK PAAR SHOW and THE TONIGHT SHOW, among others. A major breakthrough was THE JIMMY DEAN SHOW, an ABC variety series which ran from 1963 to 1966. Rowlf—one of the dogs Don

Sahlin had built—was one of the show's regulars, and each week traded barbs with the host (best known these days for his line of pork sausages).

Although Henson's success was now on a national scale, he still felt the work somewhat unfulfilling. "I was interested in filmmaking and several different forms of animation," he explained. "I was painting things and experimenting with a lot of different techniques." One of Henson's earliest non-Muppet efforts was an odd theatrical short called TIME PIECE, which featured him walking to a series of incongruous sound effects; with each step, either the background or the costume changed.

Nominated for an Oscar, it's still being distributed today.

In addition, Henson was writing scripts, designing titles and working on a variety of non-Muppet projects. "For quite a while I kept two careers going," he explained. "My filmmaking stuff was one thing and the television work with the Muppets was something else."

"I was working on a multi-media nightclub concept back in the '60s, and that led into a couple of things for NBC," Henson continued. "One was THE CUBE, which was a sort of surrealistic teleplay about a man trapped in a plastic cube. While he's in there, all these different people come in and explain why he's there."

WHILE PERFORMING, the Muppet operators wear microphones on headbands, and are often positioned only inches outside the frame. Right: To give life to Kermit during a MUPPET SHOW monologue, Henson's slips his hand up through the body and into Kermit's head, allowing subtle facial movements. Since Kermit's hands don't have to move, they are simply attached to the arms of the chair. Below: Setting up a Thanksgiving sketch on THE MUPPET SHOW, Frank Oz and Jim Henson combine to perform the Swedish Chef, as Jerry Nelson manipulates a turkey inside a specially-modified shopping cart. The hands of the Swedish Chef are those of Henson and Oz, slipped inside gloves built into the costume. Note that Oz does not wear a microphone; Henson performs the Swedish Chef's voice.





Oscar the Grouch, in his home on **SESAME STREET**.

1969

SESAME STREET [Children's Television Workshop, PBS-TV]. A landmark show, combining entertainment and education. The Muppets eventually attract more than nine million children each year to their New York City "street" family of furry creatures. The show has won two Emmys and a slew of other awards, including a Grammy for the song "Aren't You Glad You're You."

1970

HEY! CINDERELLA [ABC-TV]. Jon Stone of **SESAME STREET** wrote the adaptation,

which was produced and directed by Henson. One of three fairy tales brought to television by the Muppets in the early '70s, the project began in 1964 as a pilot for a Saturday morning children's series. Stone envisioned it as "kind of soap opera for kids," with a cliffhanger ending each week. ABC passed on the idea.

THE GREAT SANTA

SWITCH Christmas special, starring Art Carney, features the debut of Gonzo, who was snipped out of a block of foam by Henson in a matter of minutes for a minor role.

1971

THE FROG PRINCE [ABC-TV]. Kermit stars as a frog who thinks he's a human being.



King Goshawk and Prince Arthur Charming (Robin Ward) from **HEY! CINDERELLA**.

1972

THE BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS [ABC-TV]. Last of three Muppet fairy tales.

1973

JULIE ON SESAME STREET [Julie Andrews].

1975

SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE [NBC-TV] Producer Lorne Michaels offers Henson and crew a chance to do a weekly segment for the 90-minute comedy show. The concept never "jells," according to both Henson and Michaels, because the SNL-written scripts aren't

THE CUBE was produced for NBC's "Experiment in Television," and Henson followed it up with **YOUTH '68**, a live-action special ranked as one of the top shows of the year by *Variety*. But Henson's live-action career never progressed much beyond this point, thanks to the unexpected, overwhelming success of an unheralded educational show for pre-schoolers.

"With **SESAME STREET**, the Muppets suddenly took off under their own power," Henson said. "We just sort of went with it."

Jon Stone, tagged to be the producer and head writer of **SESAME STREET**, had directed parts of **YOUTH '68**, and been working with

Henson trying to sell the networks on the idea of a Muppet TV series. It was his recommendation to **SESAME STREET**'s creator Joan Cooney that brought Henson and the Muppets into the picture.

Henson helped in the development of the content and style for the landmark show, and worked with Stone and other Muppet staffers to define the different characters to be used. "We'd start improvising dialogue, then I'd go home and write sketches based on the improvisations, which would lead to even *more* improvisations," Stone recalled. "Henson's people are at their best when they're not working from strict scripted material. As soon as they got inside

the puppets, things happened that would never happen just talking to the puppeteer across a dinner table."

No one—least of all Henson—expected **SESAME STREET** to last as long as it has. He didn't even mention it to his manager, Bernie Brillstein, until the week before it went on the air in 1969. "I remember telling him, 'Incidentally, I'm working on this little children's show. It's an educational thing and I'm only doing it because I believe in it.'" Henson recalled with some irony. "There was no thought that it would ever become a big thing."

Henson, obviously, underestimated the show's instant impact and appeal. In addition to helping a generation of kids count to 10 and recite the alphabet, **SESAME STREET** turned the Muppets into merchandising giants and garnered numerous awards for Stone, Henson, et al.

However rewarding it was, **SESAME STREET** merely reinforced the perception that the Muppets were just a variety act. This, despite a trio of one-hour fairy tales produced for ABC in the early '70s: **HEY! CINDERELLA**, **THE FROG PRINCE** (featuring Kermit's first appearance as a true "frog," complete with flippers and his pointed collar) and **THE BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS**.

"**SESAME STREET** made us realize we would never be able to do what we wanted to until we were on regularly," Henson said. "There's no way you can develop characters or get deep, complete personalities without doing them regularly over and over and over again." What Henson really wanted was a series of his own. It was a frustrating quest.

"The networks were just not interested," he sighed, "even after **SESAME**

DON SAHLIN (right) and Jim Henson discuss the on-going construction of Bert, one of the Muppets designed exclusively for **SESAME STREET**. Sahlin built his first Muppet in 1960 (Rowlf) and became the key creative force behind the evolving Muppet "look" until his recent death. In addition, Henson credits Sahlin with creation of the "Muppet stitch," an almost invisible seam which passes muster even in the tightest close-ups.



HOW THE MUPPETS WORK...

A B R I E F E X P L A N A T I O N

right for the newly-created, funky Muppets.

1976 THE MUPPET SHOW

[through 1980]. After the networks reject pilot shows, Henson accepts an offer from London's Sir Lew Grade to produce a syndicated series. The show wins two Emmy awards, and at the peak of its popularity, abruptly halts production. "We wanted to quit while we were still fresh," Henson explains afterward.

Janice (right) was the most mellow Muppet. Fer shure.



"What might work one week didn't work the next. Actually, after a while, we began to get better at it. I think it probably would have survived."

But Henson never gave Michaels the chance to work out the bugs. Halfway through SNL's first season, Henson and crew packed their bags for England and the lure of their own weekly, syndicated series. If the Muppets were a hit on SESAME STREET, their five years on THE MUPPET SHOW made them international celebrities, box office sensations and—for the first time—actors and actresses who could handle a wide range of material.

In the beginning, Henson feared the limits of syndication, and had turned down a number of previous offers while waiting for the networks to wise up. ABC had been interested for a while, and commissioned two pilots (later aired as specials): THE MUPPET VALENTINE SHOW (1974) and THE MUPPET SHOW: SEX AND VIOLENCE (1975). The ratings didn't impress the brass at ABC, but they *did* interest the executives of ITC Entertainment, part of the entertainment group headed by Lord Lew Grade.

Grade saw the potential of a Muppet series to air in the 30-minute "prime-time access" slot that had been taken away from the networks. And Henson saw the potential of operating without the type of creative restrictions the American networks would have no doubt imposed. "Grade gave us total control—a completely free hand," Henson noted, "and our budget was equal to the networks. The five years we did THE MUPPET SHOW were a very nice experience."

"Very nice?" Henson's reputation for understatement is well deserved. THE MUPPET SHOW became a world-wide cultural phenomenon, with an estimated 250 million viewers in 102 countries. In the United States, it was seen on 150 stations, and became one of the top-rated syndicated shows in history.

THE MUPPET SHOW was not only different in scope from previous Muppet productions, it was different in style. Never before had there been time to develop characters. "We began to work toward more complete personalities," said Jane Henson of

Though there have been hundreds, if not thousands, of different Muppets over the years, most of them are built with the same types of materials and construction techniques. In fact, whether it's a pig, frog, dog or *thing*, there are only four basic types of Muppets.

There are "hand-and-rod" puppets—like Kermit, Miss Piggy and Grover—in which the operator has one hand inside the puppet's head manipulating the mouth, while the other hand controls a rod attached to one or both of the puppet's hands. The rods are painted to blend into the background and are so skillfully manipulated that audiences are often completely unaware of them.

There are the "live hand" puppets—such as Rowlf, Ernie or Fozzie—in which one hand manipulates the mouth while the other is actually *inside* the puppet's hand, allowing great manual dexterity. If necessary, another operator is used to manipulate the puppet's second hand.

Big Bird and Sweetums are examples of "full costume" puppets, in which the operator's body is actually *inside* the puppet. The puppeteer sees out through a carefully disguised opening and works the mouth with various hand and rod devices.

The rarest type of Muppet are oversized rod puppets—such as the Gawky Birds or Boss Men—in which the operators, dressed in black from head to foot, manipulate the puppet in front of a black background. With the correct lighting, the operators are effectively invisible.

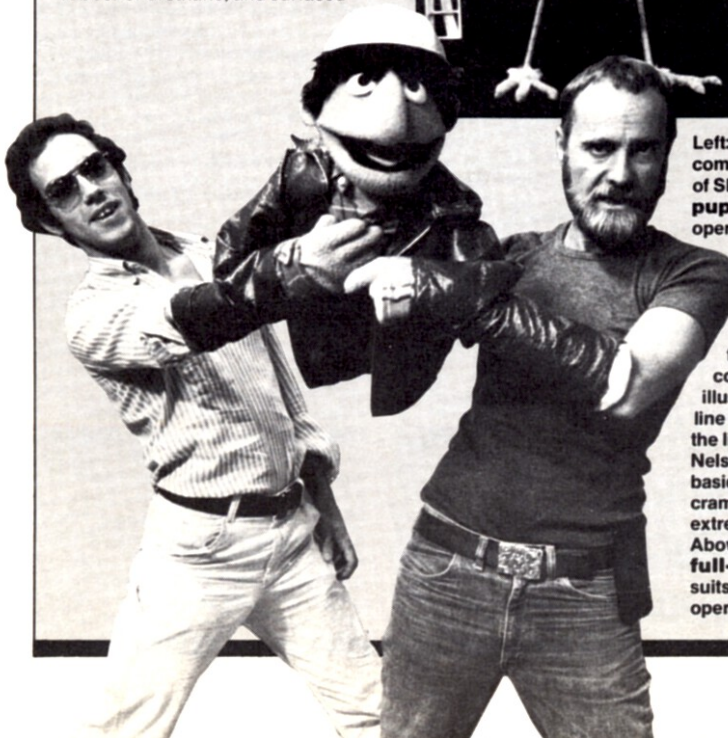
"Muppets are designed to weigh the least, move the most and be very strong," Henson explained. "We always work with materials that give us the most lifelike qualities." Puppets are generally made of foam rubber or urethane, and surfaced

with nylon or orlon fleece—elastic fabrics that take lighting well. The nearly-invisible "Muppet Stitch," created in the 1960s by the late Don Sahlin, helps the puppets stand up to TV close-ups. Sahlin also helped develop the distinctive "Muppet look"—a spatial relationship between the eyes, nose and mouth—which contributes to the characters' appeal and expressiveness.

While performing, puppeteers view their puppets on small black and white TV monitors scattered around the set. Full-costume

puppets are often equipped with *built-in* monitors, to aid in the performance. With the exception of musical numbers (and THE DARK CRYSTAL), dialogue is recorded live, and performers wear small microphones on headbands.

Often puppeteers perform from unusual and cramped positions, their arms high above their heads. During production, it is not uncommon on the set to hear cries of "Muppets Up!" at the start of a take, and "Muppets Relax!" instead of "Cut!"



Left: Richard Hunt (l) and Jerry Nelson combine to perform Biff. One of the residents of SESAME STREET, Biff is a **live-hand puppet**, because his hands are those of the operators, affording great manual dexterity.

Top: English comic Bruce Forsyth romps with the Gawky Bird—an **oversized rod puppet**—during an episode of THE MUPPET SHOW.

Operators dressed in black stand in front of a black curtain, operating black control rods. With the right lighting, the illusion is nearly flawless (though the outline of one operator can be seen obscuring the lights at left). Above Left: Frank Oz, Jerry Nelson and Richard Hunt operate a trio of basic **hand-and-rod** puppets. Their cramped positions are typical of the physical extremes called for during production.

Above Right: Richard Hunt is helped into his **full-body costume** as Sweetums. The suits are often combined with mechanisms to operate the eyes and other facial features.

AND WHY THEY WORK SO WELL.

BY ALLEN MALMQUIST

From the start, there was clearly something unusual about Jim Henson's Muppets—they moved differently, they acted differently, and they looked different than the other puppets that appeared on television in the 1950s.

That's because Henson designed the Muppets specifically for the film medium, and took skillful advantage of camera tricks, editing, costuming and special effects.

Originally a novelty act, the Muppets soon developed a certain wit, style and sophistication that further set them apart from such contemporaries as Howdy Doody, Kukla, Fran and Ollie, and the puppets of Shari Lewis.

Whether it was Rowlf (the canine piano virtuoso with the easy going manner and deadpan wit) stealing scenes from the star of THE JIMMY DEAN SHOW, or the simple humor of the characters who live on SESAME STREET (Ernie recounting cupcakes set up for a photograph because Cookie Monster is stealing them one by one) or the musings of a love-sick frog ("It's not easy being green"), the Muppets have endeared themselves to audiences, with only a few sour notes in a cacophony of successes.

But what makes one Muppet production a success will not necessarily be the key to another project. SESAME STREET provided simply-sketched characters who combined education and humor to appeal to children. The early Muppet specials, including THE FROG PRINCE and HEY! CINDERELLA, relied mainly upon witty adaptations of classic tales. The SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE bits and EMMET OTTER'S JUG-BAND CHRISTMAS relied primarily on aesthetic form (and, lacking the proper amount of wit, were only partly successful).

But Henson's greatest triumph was THE MUPPET SHOW, which succeeded on the strength of its characters and absurd humor, a sort of amalgamation of THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW and MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS.

There were, of course, gags that didn't work and whole episodes plagued by mediocrity. But THE MUPPET SHOW eventually developed into one of the finest TV shows ever created, and the "stars" of the show evolved into winning personalities in their own right.

Early shows relied on bad jokes, the appearance of bizarre creatures, and reverse role skits, such as Ruth Buzzi singing *Can't Take My Eyes Off of You* to the trollish Sweetums. There was also a constant fall-back to simple, violent gags—count how many times little creatures got eaten or blown up in the first season.

But spurred on by the top-flight writing of Jerry Juhl and his staff, and the ad-libbing of Jim Henson and his equally talented crew of puppeteers, THE MUPPET SHOW changed. The violence got more stylized (and thus, funnier), the bad jokes got worse (and thus, *better*), the humor got more absurd (an invisible cheeseburger with laryngitis, a singing vegetable patch), and characters emerged who were able to grow, express real emotions and laugh at themselves.

There were even jokes from the

Kermit raced around trying to keep the show on the air, Beauregard couldn't repair the fuses because of "all these wires in the way," but Dr. Bunsen Honeydew saved the day with a wheel generator, powered by his tiger-chased assistant Beaker.

THE MUPPET SHOW, not only let the characters stretch their wings, but gave Henson and crew the time and money to stage elaborate production numbers. But the pacing of the weekly show never let style get in the way of substance.

Unfortunately, that hasn't been the case with the Muppet's ventures into films, THE MUPPET MOVIE (1979) and THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER (1981). Comparisons between the two may explain why they failed to capture the magic: once on THE MUPPET SHOW, Kermit answered that nagging question, "Can a frog tap dance?" and proceeded to do a rousing rendition of "Happy Feet." His movement was great—at least his upper body movement; you never did see his feet. However, when Kermit joined Fozzie for a dance in THE MUPPET MOVIE, they both did a soft-shoe shuffle in full-figure view—a nice piece of puppetry but not nearly as entertaining.

The features did succeed in putting the Muppets into a new format—an extended adventure tale—and into the "real world," but too much emphasis on special effects and a never-ending stream of intrusive cameos took away from the Muppets'

strongpoint: humor.

Fortunately, the films *did* manage to expand on the "Muppet Philosophy," simple tenets of goodness that are at the heart of Henson's success over the past 30 years. While the Muppets have changed drastically over this period—moving from simple abstractions without voices, to characters with complex personalities—they've always, pro-pounded kindness, hope, and the triumph of the little guy.

In THE MUPPET MOVIE, Kermit journeys to Hollywood, believing that his desire to make people happy could be his destiny. One by one, characters join his odyssey and, through friendship and determination, this bizarre little menagerie makes it to "The Magic Factory." With Jim Henson and people (literally) close behind, they sing:

"Why are there so many songs about rainbows? That's part of what rainbows do. Rainbows are memories, sweet dream reminders, what is it you'd like to do? ... Life's like a movie, write your own ending. Keep believing, keep pretending, we've done just what we set out to do! Thanks to the lovers, the dreamers... and you!"



Miss Piggy and Kermit as lovers—characterizations that sparked the success of THE MUPPET SHOW.

cast about their very existence. There was the unforgettable time Fozzie decided to do a marionette act and ended up under his creation's control. And Gonzo thought the concept of puppets was ridiculous. "Who wants to watch dolls wiggle?" he wondered. "Wiggling dolls is weird. It might even be sick." Responds Kermit: "I didn't have the heart to tell him."

The cast of THE MUPPET SHOW, their animal forms aside, appeared very human. Unlike the cartoon-like Muppets of SESAME STREET, there were a complex lot with a penchant for extravagant behavior.

The show's absurd happenings would not have scored so well if not for these winning personalities, as the humor grew out of the characters naturally: When the Muppets did "Alice in Wonderland," Miss Piggy tried to steal Brooke Shield's starring role, Gonzo portrayed the Mad Hatter, Floyd tried to back out of his role as the smoking Caterpillar, and Fozzie put on a Tinwoodsman costume (he thought they were doing "Peter Pan").

And one night when the power failed—due to Gonzo's attempt to air condition his mildew collection—

1979

THE MUPPET MOVIE [An AFD Release, 98 mins.] The Muppets first feature-length film, produced by Henson, directed by James Frawley and written by Jerry Juhl and Jack Burns. The story of the Muppets' journey to Hollywood, it features Charles Durning and more than a dozen cameo appearances, including Orson Welles, Richard Pryor, Steve Martin and Milton Berle. "The Rainbow Connection" (by Paul Williams) is nominated for an Oscar as Best Song.

1981

THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER [Universal release, 95 mins.] The

the way the Muppets evolved from the days of surprise endings and explosions. "That had to do with our experiences on SESAME STREET and it had a great deal to do with Frank Oz."

Oz is now considered the premiere Muppet performer, and it was his gift for improvisation and characterization that brought Miss Piggy (literally) out of the chorus line and into the spotlight.

Another character to step out of the shadows was the Great Gonzo. Snipped out of a block of foam by Henson back in 1970, Gonzo was given a predilection for impossible stunts by first-season head-writer Jack Burns. But he was given a new direction by his performer, Dave Goelz. Starting with an ad-lib of "Nice legs!" to a group of passing chickens, Gonzo developed into one of the show's most psychologically-complex characters. "So much of what Gonzo is comes out of Dave Goelz," complimented Henson. "You get a talented performer, like Goelz or Oz, and then any character they do just starts to blossom."

Characteristically, Henson did not include himself in the category of "talented performer," although he certainly belongs. His relationship with Kermit goes well beyond the skillful performances of Oz or Goelz. At times it's difficult to tell where the personality of the puppeteer leaves off and where the mind of the frog begins. They have the same voice, the same gentle personality, and the same relaxed, unaffected manner of getting things done. Kermit rarely loses his temper running things at the Muppet Theatre. Henson, his associates say, *never* loses his composure, even under the most arduous pressure.

Which is not to say that Henson isn't a good businessman, because he is. From his pay of \$5 per show as puppeteer on THE JUNIORMORNING SHOW, Henson has built a small empire, with offices and workshops in London and New York City. Though he insists he doesn't have the kind of financial reserves it takes to mount his own projects ("My net worth is highly exaggerated," he explained), he *does* sit atop a sizable company with hundreds of employees and dozens of different product lines, including books, records, toys, dolls,



Scooter leads a group of pedaling puppets in an effects spectacle from **THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER**.

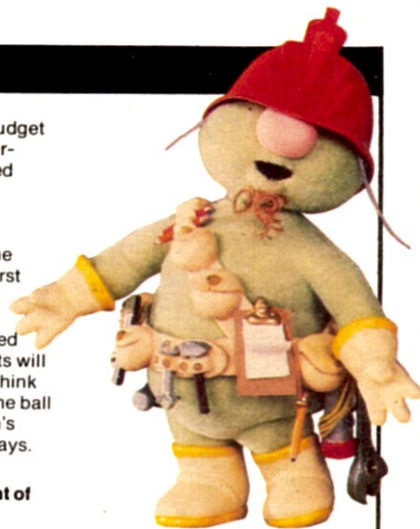
Muppets' second feature. Film starred Charles Grodin and Diana Rigg and featured cameo appearances by John Cleese, Robert Morley, Peter Ustinov and Jack Warden. Relying more on plot than on gags, it was set in the "real" world, rare for the Muppets. The film marked Henson's debut as a feature director.

1982
THE DARK CRYSTAL [Universal, 93 mins.] Co-produced (with Gary Kurtz) and co-directed (with Frank Oz) by Henson, the film is a departure from the standard

Muppet formula. A big-budget risk that scored well, it surprised some who expected Henson's usual fare.

1983
FRAGGLE ROCK [Home Box Office] Cable TV's first original weekly series, it features a new cast of Muppets. Program is hailed as a kid's show even adults will enjoy. But why cable? "I think networks have dropped the ball when it comes to children's programming," Henson says.

Right: A Doozer, a 6"-tall, radio-controlled inhabitant of HBO's FRAGGLE ROCK.



video games, ice shows, a comic strip, a theme park in Pennsylvania and a new quarterly magazine—not to mention TV and film projects.

Henson generally leaves the business details to David Lazer (his long-term producer), lawyer Al Gottesman and agent Bernie Brillstein. In fact, Henson said he isn't even certain what each of his different operating divisions is for. "I can never remember which is which," he chuckled.

But if Henson isn't totally aware of the complexities of his own corporate structure, he makes up for it with his skills at television production. Although Henson insists "there are very few things I originated," he *was* the first puppeteer to fully understand and exploit television, and became a self-taught expert in cinematography, editing and special effects.

Perhaps his most important technical achievement is the widespread use of small, black and white video monitors scattered around the set, giving the performers instant feedback on the actions and reactions of the puppets. "Considering that many of the Muppets can only open their mouths," explained Henson of the subtleties involved, "the angle at which the head is held, how it's moved in relation to the body, or where the puppet is looking creates the expressions. It's all in the way you hold a puppet. Five degrees of tilt can convey a different emotion."

Early Muppets were just bits of cloth and foam. But many recent puppets—including those in **THE DARK CRYSTAL** and the new HBO series, **FRAGGLE ROCK**—involve sophisticated mechanical controls. But Henson is still convinced that the skill of the performer is far more important than that of an engineer.

"In **FRAGGLE ROCK** we have characters called Doozers who are six inches tall, and we've been able to radio-control their movements so they can talk while riding along on a motor scooter," Henson said. "But the performance is still coming from the performer, and I think that will always be a key thing to us."

"Performance is where the humanity is," he added. "The characters are each a little part of my soul, or someone else's. Like anything any artist puts forth, there is always a chunk of the man involved."



The Great Gonzo soars into the sky, in a scene from **THE MUPPET MOVIE**.

Chunks of Henson can therefore be found in King Ploobis (SNL), Ernie (SESAME STREET), Rowlf, Dr. Teeth (of "The Electric Mayhem"), Waldorf (one of the old geezers in the box seats) and the Swedish Chef (one of his favorites), among others. And, of course, Kermit the Frog.

Actually, Kermit wasn't always the friendly frog most people think of him as. "When we first started, Kermit was just a *thing*," Henson recalled. "He wasn't even a clean green, but rather a milky turquoise. The characters were all abstract then because that was the principle I was working under. I felt abstract characters were slightly more 'pure.' If you take a character and call him a frog—or Rowlf, and call him a dog—you immediately give the audience a handle, assisting them to understand. You're giving them a bridge."

Henson first called Kermit a frog for **THE FROG PRINCE**, an hour-long special for ABC in the early '70s. It was one of the few concessions he's made in his art to appeal to a mass audience. "There are nice things about abstract puppets and nice things about more realistic ones," he said. "But in terms of going commercial, you need those bridges—you need characters like Kermit and Rowlf that are more easily accessible."

Though Henson may have bent his artistic integrity a bit by calling his Muppets by familiar labels (frog, pig, dog and bear), the success of **THE MUPPET SHOW** more than made up for it. With the series still in production, Henson made two elaborately-produced Muppet features—**THE MUPPET MOVIE** (1979) and **THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER** (1981)—before turning full attention to his most ambitious project ever, **THE DARK CRYSTAL**.

With production now completed for the first season of **FRAGGLE ROCK**, Henson has begun to look ahead to future projects. Despite overwhelming public support, he will *not* bring back **THE MUPPET SHOW** for a sixth season, but he *may* bring back the characters for a third feature film.

"I'm not tired of the characters at all," he explained, "and we have no intention of retiring Kermit, Fozzie, Gonzo and Piggy. I love the characters and I want to keep them alive. Everytime we get together and work the characters, we have a good time."

The script—still subject to change—has the Muppets in New York, trying to make it on Broadway. And in a case of art imitating life, Henson is also in New York, working on a Broadway show of his own. "It's probably a couple of years away," he said. "It's not the Muppets, but it will

involve puppets and a mixture of all kinds of other things."

Henson still has a number of scripts hanging around from the 1960s, but has no plans to film any live-action features. At least not yet. "I mean, there are already so many good directors *already* doing live-action," he explained. "I've been able to carve a niche out for myself, and I feel it's certainly the best place for me to work in movies for a while."

But what worlds are left for Jim Henson to conquer? With **THE DARK CRYSTAL**, he has proven that he can create a world for characters to live in. And with the Muppets, he has proven that puppets can touch people's emotions as few live actors could ever hope to. But Henson has never been content simply doing what he has already achieved.

What, then, is the next step? Even Henson isn't sure yet. "Puppetry has the capability of being a lot of things, and doing a lot more than people have seen with it so far," he explained. "With the latest special effects and the different techniques available to us, we can now create *anything*. We can bring to life any kind of illustration, create any sort of new creature."

"I think whole worlds are opening up in puppetry," said Henson, a smile forming beneath his beard, "that are limited only by our imaginations." □



Debbie Harry cracks a smile during filming of a **MUPPET SHOW** sketch with Kermit and a group of cub scouts. Jim Henson (right) raises Kermit into position, while (l-r) Kathy Mullen, Dave Goelz and Bob Payne wait for their cues, at left.

THE DARK CRYSTAL

The behind-the-scenes story of one of the most complex and imaginative fantasy films of all time.

Right: The Crystal Chamber of the Skeksis, where the last remnants of a dying race assemble before the Dark Crystal, the magic source of energy which prolongs their lives and provides the power to hold their subjects in evil dominion. Their slaves, the tiny, benevolent Pod people are seen as dark silhouettes in the upper chambers.

At center, above the Crystal, is a Garthim, one of the Skeksis' insect-like men-at-arms, who enforce Skeksis rule.

The angle shown is that of the moving crane shot used by director Jim Henson to open **THE DARK CRYSTAL**, his innovative puppet feature, released by Universal Pictures. The massive, pyramidal set was built at EMI Elstree Studios in Borehamwood, England by production designer Harry Lange based on the designs of conceptual artist Brian Froud. Bottom Left: Froud's early concept sketch of Jen, the film's Gelfling hero, showing a blue skin that was later abandoned to make the puppet seem more human-like in appearance. Bottom Middle & Right: Froud's concept sketch of an urRu, the gentle philosophers who oppose Skeksis rule, and the creature as realized by Henson's puppet craftsmen.





Jim Henson was only one day away from signing a deal in September '82 to buy back **THE DARK**

CRYSTAL from its financier, Associated Communications Corporation (ACC). The deal fell through when company head Robert Holmes A'Court personally decided not to sell.

Henson, creator of the Muppets, is reluctant to discuss the behind-the-scenes financial maneuvering that saved his current brainchild from certain obscurity. Only weeks earlier, ensconced in a comfortable suite at Chicago's Hyatt Regency for a presentation of **THE DARK CRYSTAL** to the World Science Fiction Convention, Henson bent over a Matterhorn-sized confection of ice cream piled high with strawberries and whipped topping that looked like a fantasy straight out of **THE MUPPET MOVIE**. "I don't think we want that information to get out," he said in a voice that is recognizably Kermit the Frog's, only octaves lower.

Henson refers to his personal intervention, to the tune of \$2 million, to save **THE DARK CRYSTAL** from previously scheduled summer openings that would have been disastrous. "Universal didn't have the theaters in June and they were going to release it at the end of July or August," said Henson. "I thought that was just a terrible time for the film. That was the main reason I delayed it."

Universal agreed with Henson's bleak assessment of prospects for **THE DARK CRYSTAL** if released during the summer, but ACC insisted on the planned summer openings even if prime playdates were unavailable. ACC, a company deep into debt and reorganization under new management, was adamant about seeing a return on its \$26 million investment in the picture at the earliest date, whatever the repercussions. ACC agreed to postpone the release date only after Henson intervened to put up the \$2 million in additional interest incurred on their investment by delaying until December 17. And Henson began negotiations to buy back the film.

"If I purchase the film from ACC, the fact that I agreed to purchase the interest cost goes out the window," said Henson. "It

Chapter headings like the one shown above, interspersed throughout this article, are Brian Froud's conceptual drawings for **THE DARK CRYSTAL**.

article by
Alan Jones

Additional interviews by
James Van Hise





would be *my* film at that point." Henson had originally considered financing the film, but couldn't, even with the vast resources of his worldwide Muppet empire.

"I don't want the audience to think they're doing me a favor by going to the movie," said Henson. "It's not like Coppola. There's always these big stories that he's mortgaging his house to get *APOCALYPSE NOW* together. I don't want that kind of publicity."

The point, however, is much the same. After nearly seven years of conceiving, preparing and filming *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, Henson was prepared to put his personal fortune at stake to see his unconventional project reach audiences as it was intended. It was perhaps that kind of conviction that convinced ACC not to sell.



The concept of doing a film such as *THE DARK CRYSTAL* first occurred to Jim

Henson in 1975 while creating a continuing comedy segment for a new television variety series, *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*. Henson devised a fantasy world of barren landscapes and smoking volcanoes, peopled only by bizarre puppet creatures. While the thrust of the

segment was still humorous, unlike the Muppets, the creatures were made to look more realistic with the use of taxidermy glass eyes.

"Those characters were part of getting to *THE DARK CRYSTAL*," said Henson. "I was very excited by what we were doing in terms of the taxidermy eyes and the more realistic looking sets. These characters were still sort of half cartoon. I figured we could take that and push it a little further and we'd have something that would get very realistic."

Henson abandoned *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE* to devote himself to producing *THE MUPPET SHOW*, but was determined to further explore the potential for surrealism in puppet technology. Henson was particularly drawn to an illustration in *The Pig-Tale*, a children's book based on the poem by Lewis Carroll, published by Little Brown & Company that same year.

"I had been fiddling around with this image of a very gruesome cocktail party peopled with reptilian-like creatures dressed in fine clothes, maintaining a sophisticated level of conversation," said Henson. "Then I saw this drawing of some crocodiles in very ritzy surroundings and it became the key image that kicked off the whole

project." The concept eventually survived as one of the key sequences of *THE DARK CRYSTAL*: the Skeksis' bizarre dinner party.

Part of Henson's need for greater puppet realism was his desire to strike out in a new direction for the Muppets, away from comedy and caricature and into the realm of serious drama.

"In theory you can touch an audience very deeply with puppets," said Henson. "Puppetry is capable of a very wide range of emotion. A lot of the interesting work that's done with puppets on an adult level is not funny. I've seen some really beautiful, moving productions. Most people haven't. That's why I think puppetry is so exciting. I think it has the capability of doing a lot more than people have seen it do so far."

The project, then called simply *THE CRYSTAL*, was to be Henson's first feature film, an extremely unconventional one at that, and expensive to boot. For financing, Henson turned to Lord Lew Grade and his British ACC film and television production empire. Henson was making a fortune for Grade's company with the worldwide television success of *THE MUPPET SHOW*, and Grade was expanding into film production and distribution in a big way. Grade lent a sympathetic ear to the project, and

YODA was developed for *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* as a result of the expertise provided by Henson puppet craftsmen at work on *THE DARK CRYSTAL*. Henson's co-director, Frank Oz, is shown operating the Jedi Master for filming, assisted by another Henson associate, Wendy Midener, who is obscured behind the puppet. Midener sculpted and built the prototype for Yoda, the first puppet ever filmed with a skin made totally of foam latex, a makeup material adapted for use on *THE DARK CRYSTAL*.

put up the money for its development on the condition that Henson devote his first feature film to the Muppets. The Muppets meant money and that was something Grade understood.

"Fortunately *STAR WARS* came out when we were formulating all this [May 1976]," said Henson. "We took heart from its classic storyline, which was its great strength. I remember talking to Lew Grade, trying to talk him into the movie, and I was finally able to say, 'Well, it's sort of like *STAR WARS*.' And everybody would respond, 'Oh well, that sounds good!' For *THE DARK CRYSTAL* we knew we could draw on the same strong values of thousands of years of storytelling that made *STAR WARS* so strong."

The earliest preproduction work on the film began at Henson's New York Muppet workshop in 1977,

even though no script or storyline had yet been devised. Puppet crafts people at work on the Muppets began the problem solving process of making puppets that looked and moved more realistically. At the time, nearby Astoria Studios, reactivated by the filming of *THE WIZ*, was being considered as a production base.

Finally, an act of God made the whole project coalesce. While commuting to London in February 1978 for production of *THE MUPPET SHOW*, Henson found himself snowbound after boarding the Concorde in New York with his daughter Lisa. Lisa Henson, now 22 and the editor of the *Harvard Lampoon*, had been encouraging the concept along with friendly advice. "She wanted me to do something that meant creating an entire world of very obvious, black-and-white, good guys and bad guys," said Jim Henson. Put up for three days at a Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge near the airport, Henson began to formalize concepts for the film on paper.

"There was still no plot at that point," said Lisa. "We talked about the classes of creatures and Jim was trying to conceptualize the kind of world that would make them real. He even started mapping it out—where the good guys would live, how the heroines might work their way from the outside and infiltrate the reptileruling class. He was working it out spatially and devising how the characters would look."

How the characters would look became the key to the film's development. Jerry Houle, Henson's licensing vice president, spotted the work of fantasy artist Brian Froud in *An Anthology of English Illustration* at a book fair in San Francisco and showed it to Henson. Houle soon found himself on a flight to Devon, England, at Henson's request, to meet Froud and discuss the project. Houle was

INSPIRATION for THE DARK CRYSTAL came to Henson in the form of this illustration by Leonard B. Lubin for a book of children's poetry by Lewis Carroll called "The Pig-Tale," published by Little, Brown & Co. in 1975. The image of crocodiles preparing for a dinner party meshed with Henson's idea of a film involving lizards acting elegantly in very ritzy surroundings. And in such a manner, the Skeksis were born.

delighted to discover that Froud sculpted as well as drew. Froud's work for his first solo book, *The Land of Froud*, and a follow-up then in progress, *Faeries*, expressed a talent ideally suited to visualize Henson's fantasy epic. Armed with photographs of Froud's studio and work in progress, Houle reported back to Henson.

"I loved the style and richness of Froud's illustrations," said Henson. "I knew intuitively that his work could be turned into three dimensional characters for our film—it was that translatable." Froud flew to New York to meet with Henson, and was won over by Henson's enthusiasm for the project and for Froud's work. Froud signed to work on the film, an agreement one source close to the production termed "an exclusive, five-year contract," but which Froud characterized as a very loose, informal agreement.

"My job on *THE DARK CRYSTAL* was an odd one for me," said Froud, an imaginative, independent artist accustomed to working alone, following his own instincts, with only himself to please. "I was hired to visualize somebody else's vision. I put a form on Jim Henson's dreams, and I seem to have pleased him."

The working relationship was unique for Henson as well. "Everything else I've done, I've started with a story, a script," he said. "With *THE DARK CRYSTAL* we designed the characters and other life forms first. We were interested in giving a new world a sense of reality. The story would evolve



later."

Preproduction on *THE DARK CRYSTAL* began in earnest in July 1978 at Henson Associates' Muppet workshop in New York City. Henson formed a core group of seven technicians to begin the design and fabrication of puppet character prototypes that would serve as the film's "actors." The tight-knit group included sculptors Tim Clark working on the urRu Mystics, Wendy Midener on Gellings, Fred Nihda on Garthims, and Lyle Conway on the Skeksis; animator Leigh Donaldson worked on problems of the creatures' mechanical design; Tom McLaughlin, pulled from work on the Muppets, advised on the use of foam latex; and Sherry Amott

served as coordinator and overall supervisor.

The first five months of work involved rudimentary preliminary designs, none of which would be used in the final film except for a few unimportant background woodland creatures. At this time Henson was in the throes of determining exactly how far he wanted to take the concept of realism as applied to puppets. The philosophy of Muppet design had been to reduce nonessential elements and focus on broad, clean features, basically an abstract simplifying process. For *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, Henson wanted dense, realistic detail, and sought a compromise



THE LAND OF GORCH and its bizarre inhabitants were created by Henson in 1975 for a continuing Muppets segment for the television variety series *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*. The experience of making the characters more realistic than the Muppets, using life-like taxidermist eyes for the first time, and creating a fantasy world in which they could "live," led Henson to conceptualize the idea for *THE DARK CRYSTAL*. The cast of characters were designed by Henson and art director Michael Frith and included (l-r): the Mighty Favog, played by Frank Oz, a stone idol that came to surprising life and spouted pithy, down-to-earth philosophy; Scred, fanged, with dead bird in hand, the most overtly "monsterish" of the group played by Jerry Nelson; Peuta; Wiss; Vazh; and King Ploobis, with scrimshaw teeth, played by Henson. "From the rotting forest to the stagnant mud flat... this land was made for you and me!" sang the characters of Gorch, but after 15 shows Henson called it quits, unsatisfied with the script quality.



Left: Puppet-maker Graham Galvin displays Aughra's leg. The foot, shin and calf were cast in foam latex. The upper leg, seen only beneath Aughra's costume, was scissored from Scotfoam, and given realistically rippling muscles. The foam pieces are attached to a jointed metal armature which gave the puppet its humorously distinctive squatting motion. **Right:** Tests were made to determine the mode of operation for each puppet character, so that body shapes could be designed to fit. This test for Aughra suggests two primary operators, but was deemed too bulky. An even bulkier option included a third cable operator, and was also abandoned. A single enclosed operator was actually used.

between realism and Muppet design characteristics that would produce a clearly defined face.

Wendy Midener began to experiment with the use of foam latex for the puppets of Jen and Kira. Her first prototypes were made with a hard latex base over which was stretched a chamois leather skin, a technique that would have been fine for the Muppets but which proved too inflexible and inexpressive for the realism demanded of the Gellings. Henson suggested the use of foam latex, and brought in makeup expert Dick Smith to school Midener and Tom McLaughlin on the production and use of the material.

Initially, Brian Froud was unable to devote full attention to conceptualizing *THE DARK CRYSTAL*.

PUPPET WORKSHOPS were held two evenings each week to train puppeteers for *THE DARK CRYSTAL*. Jim Henson goes through a speaking exercise here, using old Muppets to save wear and tear on the puppets to be used for filming. Experienced puppet performers mingled with novices to provide tips and helpful advice.

TAL due to his commitments to finish his best-selling book, *Faeries*. Froud supplied a few rough sketches of the Skeksis and some swamp creatures after signing on to the project, and was called back to New York from time to time to confer with Henson and the pre-production team, already at work.

Henson thrived on an atmosphere of close collaboration, and used his group to define the scope and limitations of realism in what was to be the most ambitious puppet film ever undertaken. "We made a collective decision not to use humans in makeup or costume," said Henson. "As soon as you put an actor in this kind of landscape, you've established a scale that is too reminiscent of the real world. I've always felt that this is where other fantasy films in the past have gone wrong. I wanted creatures with four arms and all different shapes and sizes. We had to break free of the human form to achieve that. I wanted to be totally submerged in another world. We kicked around ideas like what food the Skeksis would eat. All that was

terribly important to me."

At these production meetings Froud doodled as Henson, he and other members of the team formulated and refined character and creature design ideas. "The meetings were wonderful," said Froud. "We'd frequently end in fits of hysterical laughter, usually over the Skeksis, throwing out ideas on what they would do in the film, how they would act. What the Skeksis do is pretty disgusting stuff. Henson would look at the visuals I was coming up with and make suggestions. I would change things until we finally met on some middle ground that we both felt was right."



In late '78, producer Gary Kurtz approached Jim Henson for help.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK was due to go before the cameras in March, and Stuart Freeborn, makeup and special creature designer for the film, was having serious problems devising a puppet Yoda that would meet scripted requirements. "What Henson was doing with artificially created creatures was state-of-the-art," said Kurtz. "I wanted that knowledge and expertise behind Yoda. We knew we had to create a

unique type of character for the film."

Henson showed Kurtz tests of the preliminary design work being done on *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, but was reluctant to provide the help Kurtz needed. "I didn't want to become involved because I felt our project was really along the same lines," said Henson. Henson was acutely aware that the *STAR WARS* sequel would reach audiences long before *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, due to Henson's prior commitment to Lord Grade for *THE MUPPET MOVIE*, then currently in production. Henson turned Kurtz away.

But Kurtz was a good salesman, and after repeated talks, sold Henson on the concept of an exchange of information and expertise between the two companies: Henson would pave the way for the creation of Yoda for *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, and in return Kurtz would act as an advisor on *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, providing knowledge and expertise gained as the producer of *STAR WARS* and its sequel.

From the core group of preproduction technicians, Henson chose Wendy Midener to work on Yoda. "My role was simply a gesture study," said Medener. "I invested the puppet with its look and rudimentary personality. I took the design from drawings that were given to me and three-dimensionalized them."

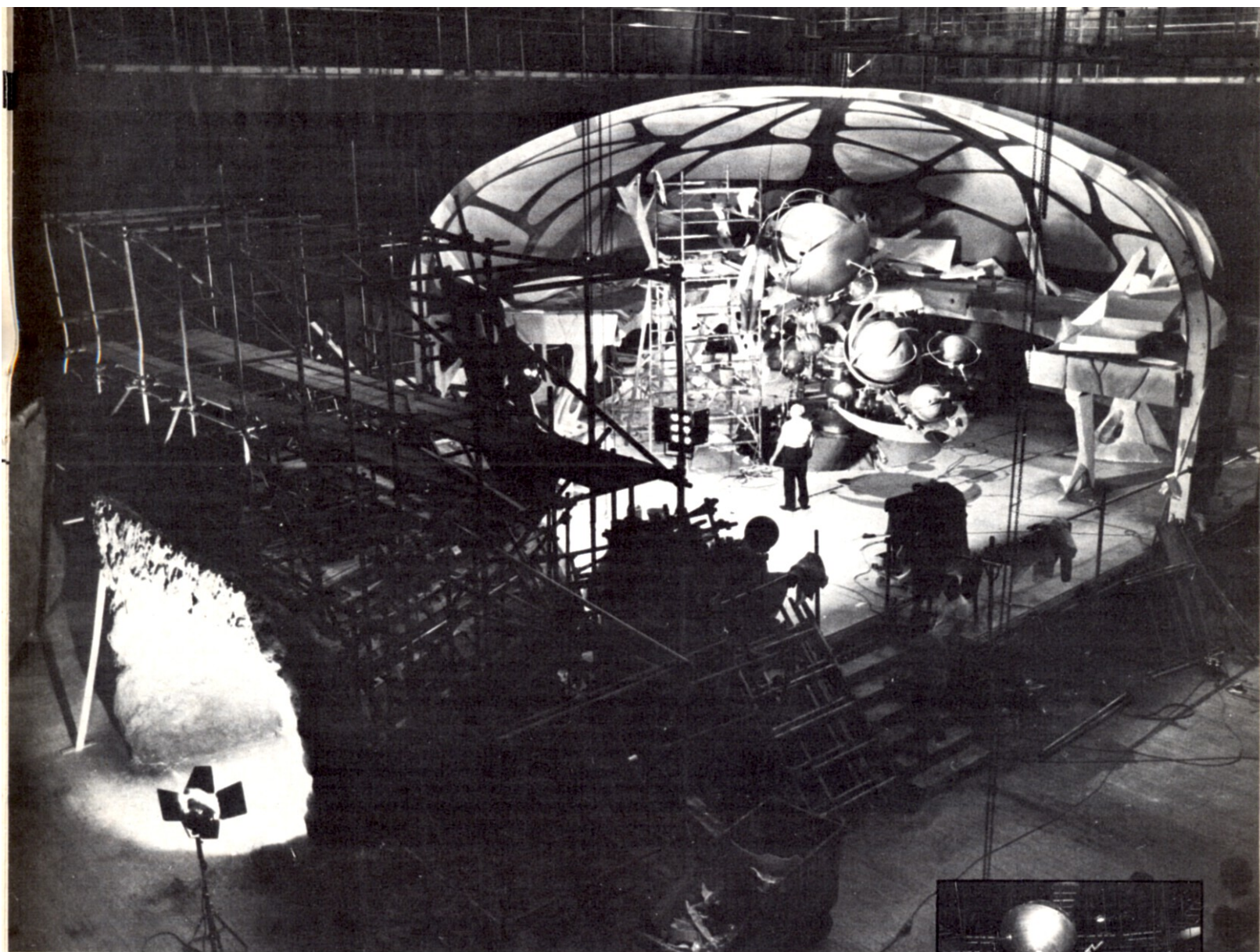
After sculpting Yoda, Midener worked on the construction of a prototype puppet and stayed with the production continuously through filming. Her prior experience in the use of foam latex for puppet work proved invaluable. "Yoda was the first instance of anyone using a total latex skin for a puppet," said Midener. "He was an experiment for what we were planning on *THE DARK CRYSTAL*."

Henson also provided the team of operators who brought Yoda to life, headed by long-time associate Frank Oz, including Kathryn Mullen, who plays Kira in *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, David Barclay and Midener, though only Oz was credited. "I was the eyes and ears," said Midener.

Though shooting began early in 1979, the filming of Yoda's scenes was delayed until August due to the fact that construction of the puppet by Stuart Freeborn's makeup group was seriously behind schedule. Yoda's scenes were the last to be filmed, involving only actor Mark Hamill on the standing Dagobah set, and the long delays proved to be a grave expense for the production.

"Nobody on *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* really knew about puppets or how to work them," said Midener. "I remember getting directions like 'Right, now we want Yoda to run across the stage.' And you'd have to tell them, 'Wait a minute! He can't possibly





do that. They would have to come up with another way of approaching the scene."

Though numerous voices were auditioned for the role of Yoda, operator Frank Oz ended up dubbing the lines he voiced during his performance. That resulted in Yoda sounding distinctly like Miss Piggy and Fozzie Bear, two well-known Oz characterizations for the Muppets. "It was a difficult choice because of his very recognizable voice, but no one else seemed to capture the essence of Yoda," said Kurtz. "Ultimately we came back to Oz because of the personality of his voice."

Oz saw Yoda as a challenge and a learning experience. "With Miss Piggy and Fozzie Bear, I'm performing," he said. "With Yoda I was acting. I loved it because I had to concentrate so much on the physical aspect of the character." Supposedly this experience served Oz in good stead for his starring roles in *THE DARK CRYSTAL* as Aghra, Keeper of Secrets and the Chamberlain Skeksis, yet Oz tends to discount the importance of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* in the

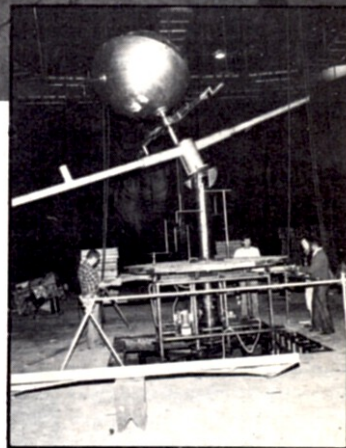
development of *THE DARK CRYSTAL*.

"We wanted to know more about the requirements of a fantasy film," said Oz of Henson's agreement to collaborate with Kurtz, "but in the long run I don't think the exchange of information was necessary. We've each pursued separate avenues."

Yoda's builder, Wendy Midener, disagrees. "Yoda was the fore-runner of everything we were trying to achieve on *THE DARK CRYSTAL*," she said. "It gave us all a taste of what it was like using that kind of sophisticated puppet on a set when you had a limited amount of time and very elaborate scenes that you had to get done. That sort of training was vital to *THE DARK CRYSTAL*. Although we knew deep down inside what could or couldn't be done, Yoda confirmed that for us in no uncertain terms."

Seeing the value in the practical experience gained in shooting Yoda for *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, after filming wrapped Henson asked Gary Kurtz to act as his co-producer on *THE DARK CRYSTAL*.

THE ORRERY under construction, platformed 4½ feet off the stage floor to allow puppet performers to stand below the set. The set floor could be removed in four foot square sections along with its platform of metal stanchions for that purpose. Attached (left) is a set of the cave walls which lead up into the orrery. Aghra's rotating mechanical replica of the heavens. The mechanics for the orrery (inset) were sunk fifteen feet beneath the set floor and could be fixed to rotate on a variety of different axes and preset to operate with repeatable eccentric moves, making this one of the more dangerous sets.

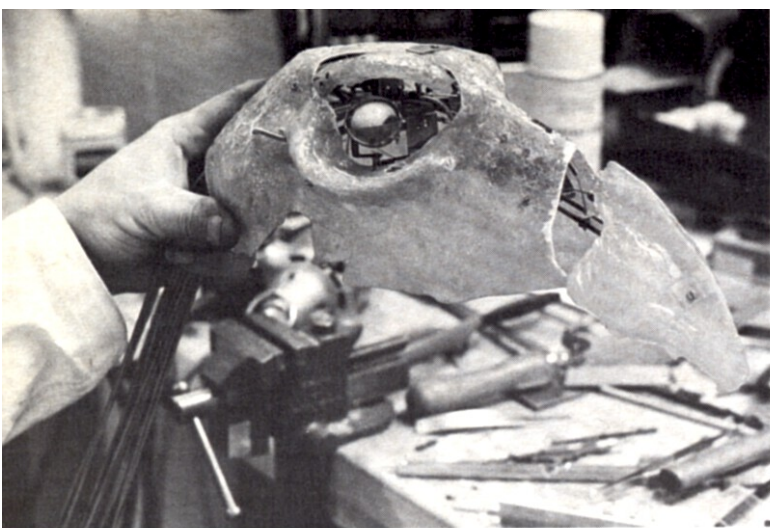


TAL and Kurtz accepted. Kurtz wanted to pursue projects of his own as a producer and director and had already decided not to act as producer for George Lucas on *RETURN OF THE JEDI*, the next *STAR WARS* installment. "That would have been another constant three years of work," said Kurtz. "THE DARK CRYSTAL would give me some time to develop my other plans."

Henson had already tapped Frank Oz to be his co-director, taking full advantage of Oz's Yoda experience. The offer took Oz by surprise. "We were shooting *THE MUPPET MOVIE* when he asked

me to direct *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, and it came right out of the blue," said Oz, who jumped at the chance.

Oz had worked as a puppeteer for Henson for more than 18 years, since a teenager, and is now vice president of Henson Associates, Inc., the parent company of Henson's worldwide Muppet empire. "I wanted Frank Oz to help me because I knew I would be doing a certain amount of performing," said Henson, who plays Gelfling Jen and the Skeksis Ritual Master in *THE DARK CRYSTAL*. "I needed someone outside whose judgment I trusted implicitly."



CABLE MECHANISMS like that shown at left give the puppets of **THE DARK CRYSTAL** realistic and expressive facial movement. The prototype cable device inside this fiberglass Skeksis underskull provided nose, eye and eyebrow movement. Sequential photos of the Chamberlain (below) show how cable mechanisms change his expression by turning down the corners of his mouth and moving his upper lip to expose his teeth.



THE MUPPET MOVIE was released in June 1979 and emerged as one of the season's biggest hits.

Beginning its fourth season, **THE MUPPET SHOW** continued as the biggest hit ever in the history of television syndication. Henson was now prepared to go forward with **THE DARK CRYSTAL**. Lord Grade, watching the Muppet money pour into ACC, his film and television conglomerate, was not. Grade wanted a Muppet sequel. Henson and Grade settled on a compromise: Grade would finance **THE DARK CRYSTAL** as a package deal with **THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER**, the sequel he wanted. "The two projects would be prepared and filmed back-to-back, but the Muppet sequel was to be filmed first.

Henson's first order of business was to transform his vague, amorphous ideas about the characters and world of **THE DARK CRYSTAL** into a story and screenplay. Henson hired writer David Odell, who had scripted **THE MUPPET MOVIE**. Odell had written **BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUKTU** for public television, based on the books of Kurt Vonnegut, and wrote many of the episodes for the last two seasons of **THE MUPPET**

SHOW. Odell fleshed-out Henson's slim quest storyline into a final shooting script.

Henson began active preproduction on **THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER** and **THE DARK CRYSTAL** simultaneously. The core group of seven preproduction technicians who had been working on **THE DARK CRYSTAL** in New York were moved to London in July, and told to gear up for filming. Wendy Midener was already there, actively involved in the creation of Yoda for **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**.

With the production now based in England, illustrator Brian Froud began to work full time on the film's conceptual design. Sherry Amott took charge of laying the groundwork for the project in London, establishing a workshop facility in Hampstead Heath, which Henson purchased outright, and began hiring the staff which would design and build the film's puppet cast of thousands. Amott's group would expand from the original seven to over four hundred technicians during the next two years.

As hero and heroine of the story, the Gelflings Jen and Kira served as the most identifiably human-like characters in the world of **THE DARK CRYSTAL**, providing a focus for audience identification. Henson had ruled out using actors in makeup early in preproduction

when the characters were more animal-like in design. Froud's original concept called for Gelflings to be furry and blue in color to suggest an other-worldliness. "We just couldn't get the animal look to work," said Froud. "But as the characters moved toward a more human appearance they tended to look dead. Our aim was to make them look slightly ethereal, so the puppeteers could project a lot into them. The danger there was blandness."

Wendy Midener, assigned the task of sculpting Jen and Kira, worked closely with Froud and Henson. Midener sculpted hundreds of design variations, adding horns, taking off noses, making characters that were cat-like or deer-like. "Froud wanted dignity," she said. "I brought the two sides together. Froud would say, 'Make the ears smaller.' So I'd lop them off a little. Henson would say, 'Widen the eyes.' I love sculpting and I'm a fast worker. I'd incorporate their suggestions and they'd tell me if I was on the right track."

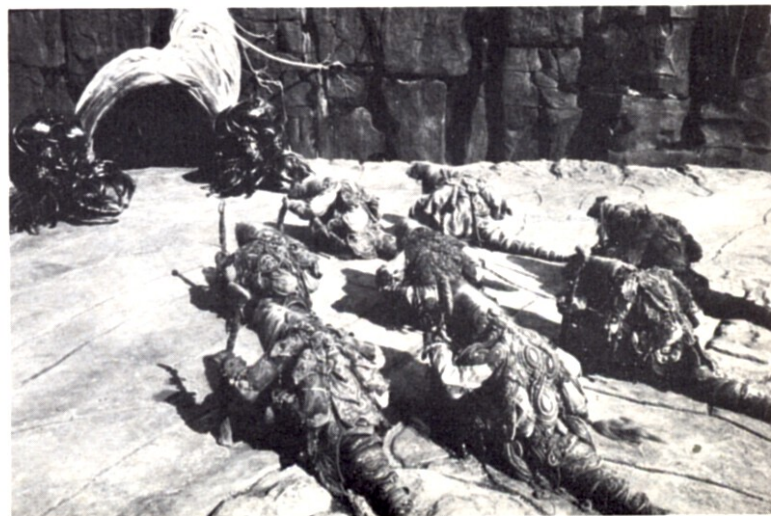
As the design progressed, the characters aged from being youngsters of only six years to what Midener suggests are now teenagers of about 16. The animal look failed to jell in her estimation because it proved an obstacle to making Kira look pretty. "The Gelflings ended up being far more human than I ever expected them to be," she said.

Typifying the unhuman characters of **THE DARK CRYSTAL** are the urRu—wrinkled, squat, slow-moving creatures with four arms, referred to in the film simply as the Mystics. Froud's designs for the

creatures spring directly from the pages of his published work in *The Land of Froud*. Gentle philosophers who raise Jen in their Hidden Valley, the Mystics are given distinct characters in the wrinkled whorls and spirals of flesh that mark their faces. Tim Clark sculpted the head and hands of the four primary characters from Froud's detailed color renderings, then devised variations of his own for the remainder.

The Skeksis are the urRu's flip side—vile, disgusting creatures who serve as the film's dark villains, holding evil dominion over Henson's world of magic and wonder using the power of **THE DARK CRYSTAL**. As the characters which triggered Henson's concept for the film, the Skeksis were among the first to be designed, sketched by Froud during his first New York visit. Originally the creatures were to be refined and elegant, with a bright, glittery look, in keeping with Leonard B. Lubin's Lewis Carroll illustration in *The Pig-Tale of Crocodiles* meticulously preparing for a dinner party by taking a bath. Although the creatures remained lizard-like, an opposite approach for the Skeksis was finally decided upon. "They gradually became more faded and battered," said Froud. "Our concept was that they never washed or changed. They just kept putting on layers and layers of clothes."

Froud sculpted *maquettes*, small dimensional sketches, of the more prominent Skeksis characters, and produced pencil roughs to capture the essence of others in secondary roles. Lyle Conway sculpted the nine individual Skeksis characters seen in the film, based on Froud's designs. With a background in the toy industry, Conway had previously sculpted the stop-motion figures seen in David Allen's **THE DAY TIME ENDED**, and was accustomed to designing his own work. His working relationship with Froud was nevertheless an easy one. "Froud respected the sculpting team as artists," said





The Chamberlain Skeksis was the most complex of the mechanized puppets built for THE DARK CRYSTAL, with 21 cable activated parts, and was the most finely detailed of the Skeksis sculpted by puppet-maker Lyle Conway. For this dramatic scene where the Chamberlain is stripped of his clothes, Sarah Bradpiece sculpted a body.

Conway. "We didn't have to mechanically reproduce his designs. He welcomed our input in the final execution."

To help give each Skeksis its own identifiable personality, shop supervisor Sherry Amott suggested assigning each with a job and function around the castle. A script meeting among the filmmakers soon resulted in a list of titles and job descriptions which guided Conway in the creation of subtle facial characteristics for each.

"Henson was concerned about

how the Skeksis designs would be realized, because he didn't want to do a 'monster movie,'" said Conway. "He didn't want something of THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON school of lizardry. When Henson saw me detailing the first sculpture he worried that it was going to look scaly and warty, like something from the 1950s. It was a concern we were very conscious of in interpreting Froud's drawings."

Fizzgig, perhaps the most winning character in THE DARK

CRYSTAL, was one of Froud's simpler designs, basically a ball of fur with two rows of teeth resembling a gin trap. As Kira's trusty pet, Fizzgig is the most Muppet-like all of the film's characters, stealing nearly every scene it's in. Rollie Krewson fabricated Fizzgig's face by bonding fur of a lion's tail, one hair at a time, to a base knitted from elastic thread. The body consists of opossum, raccoon, fox and lamb furs, tiny squares of which were sewn onto an elastic base by hand. Oz and Henson

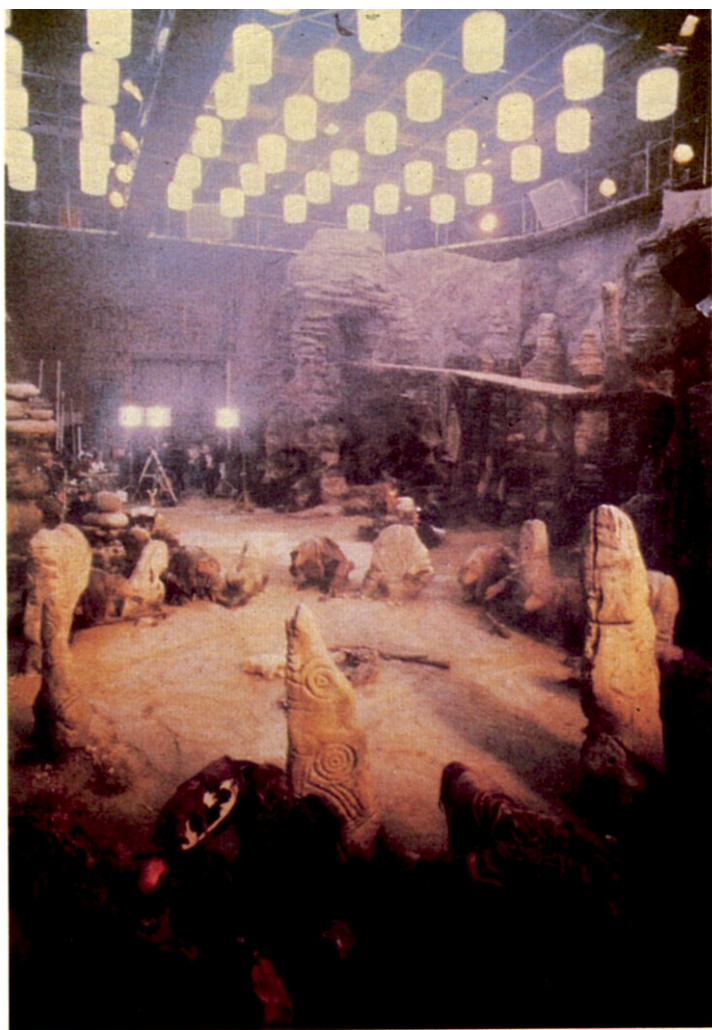
called for the extra row of teeth during construction, giving Fizzgig its distinctive bite.

Froud became so wrapped up in overseeing the sculpting and design work of the major creatures and characters that he was forced to give up work he had reserved for himself on his personal favorite, Aughra, Keeper of Secrets. "Froud appeared at my table one day with a sketch of Aughra," said sculptor Lyle Conway. "He said he would be too busy and asked if I could find time in my schedule to do her."



SPECIAL EFFECTS

supervised by Brian Smithies included the use of "capping miniatures" to complete panoramic landscapes that could not be built full scale. The climactic confrontation of the urRu and the Skeksis' Garthim warriors at the foot of the Skeksis castle (far left) was filmed on a full scale set built on the backlot of EMI Elstree Studios. For long shots this small patch of live-action set was carefully composited into a miniature of the surrounding landscape (middle left). The composite shown is an early test without color correction. A smaller scale miniature for more distant shots was also built (near left) for the Landstrider battle sequence.



MYSTIC VALLEY was built on a sound stage at EMI Elstree Studios by production designer Harry Lange from conceptual designs by Brian Froud. Cinematographer Ossie Morris used 6kw quartz overhead space lights with white silk skirts to provide a soft, shadowless overhead light. Colored filters on the camera and other lights provided a gold tinge, a lighting concept Morris developed while shooting **THE WIZ**. Being filmed in the foreground is the urRu funeral.

final puppets that would be used for filming once **THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER** wrapped principal photography. "We just couldn't dither any more designs," said sculptor Wendy Midener. "We had to begin the extensive process of mechanizing the puppets and making them work."

Though the design phase was essentially over, Brian Froud found that design decisions continued to occupy his time throughout construction. "The easy part was getting the basic look," said Froud. "The problem was translating that into characters that could move. All the manipulative and mechanical problems meant constant design changes as work progressed. It was my job to make sure the changes didn't get too far away from Henson's concepts and the original thumbnail sketches I had done." Froud's designs had to incorporate ways of hiding not only the puppet operators, but often mechanisms as bulky as a TV monitor.

The Gelflings, Jen and Kira, were basically hand puppets made to fit the hands of performers Jim Henson and Kathryn Mullen. Hand movements operated the mouths for dialogue. The remainder of the puppets' head space, about half, was taken up with other mechanisms for facial and eye movements operated by radio control. The puppets were cast in foam latex, then fitted by Gelfling group leader Wendy Midener to an

underskeleton containing mechanisms for head and arm movement.

Gelfling arms were operated like rod puppets, with the operating rod extending out behind the elbow, shielded by the arm itself from the camera's view. Since the operator's right hand operated the puppet's head, Gelfling right arms were manipulated by another operator in tandem with Henson or Mullen. For some complex hand movements, cable operated arms were built.

The urRu Mystics were also hand puppets of a sort—the head is worn at the end of the operator's outstretched right hand, which operates eyeblink and some lip movements—but with the operator completely inside. The performer squats on his haunches, his head bent forward and right arm extended, providing the creature its unusual body shape and slow, shuffling walk. The stance was developed in New York by performer Brian Muehl and Mystic group leader Tim Clark. Muehl plays Mystics UrZah and the Dying Master and had worked with Mummenschanz, a dance group renowned for innovative effects derived from contorting performers into unusual postures.

Clark mechanized the urRu in addition to sculpting them. Foam latex skins were fitted onto fiberglass understructures. Cable mechanisms for eyebrows, eye movement, breathing and other functions were built-in and activated by operators just out of camera range. With their free left hand, performers operated only one of the

THE POD VILLAGE was a small scale, intimate set, shown here during filming of the festive visit of Jen and Kira (left foreground). Co-director Frank Oz is crouching down to hit the marks of the pod waiter's walk-on performance at center. Virtually every scene in **THE DARK CRYSTAL** is a special effect of some kind, with performers and cable crews hidden out of camera range or behind the sets.

Conway felt honored by the request and accepted, finding the work his most rewarding contribution to the film. Aughra, the astronomer/scientist who teaches Jen the true nature of his quest, is one of the most colorful and expressive puppet characters in **THE DARK CRYSTAL**. Conway's subtle, finely detailed realization of Froud's design contributes greatly to the puppet's impact and realism.

"You had to keep in mind when sculpting how the puppet would eventually move," said Conway, explaining Aughra's wrinkled look. "The wrinkles provide a natural place for the foam to fold and allow movement. It wasn't at all like the Muppets, where a hand automatically became a mouth. We had to develop a new design approach because mechanisms were inside."



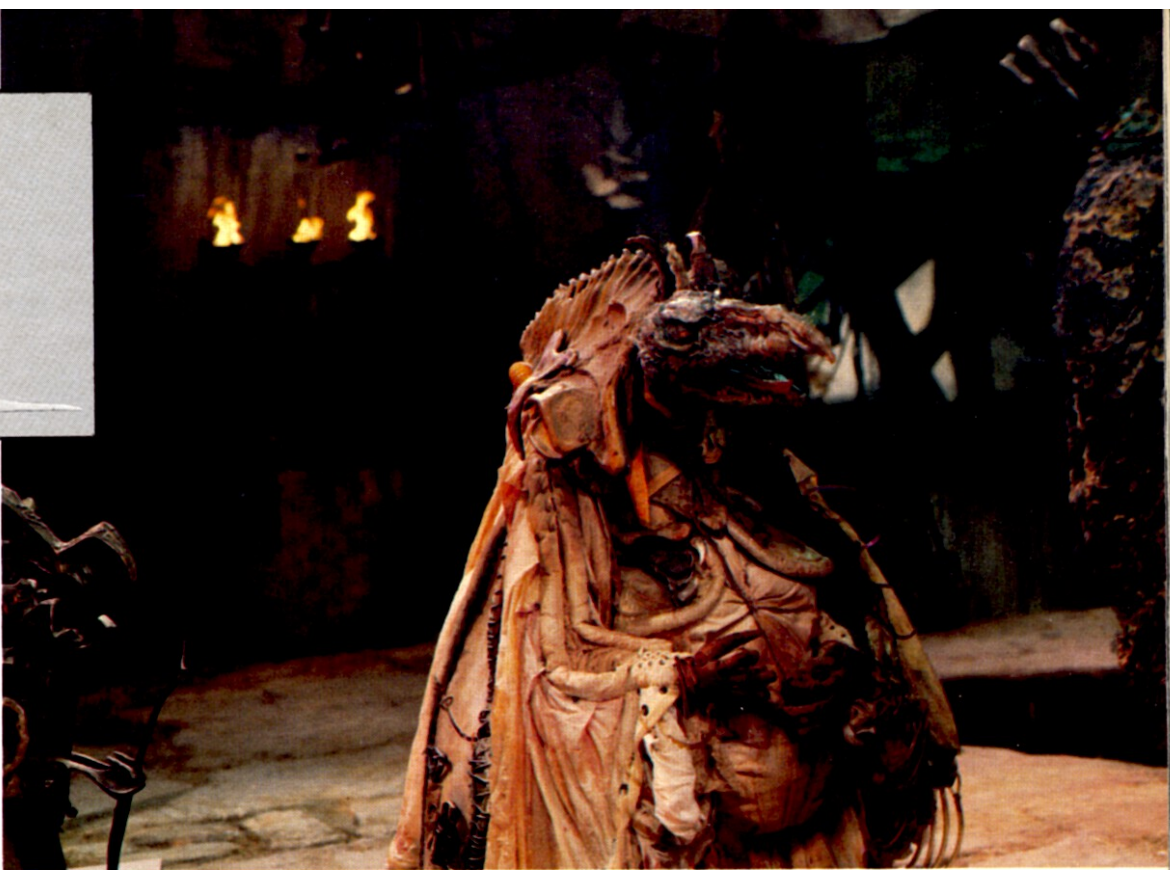
Henson began to assemble the technical crew who would shoot

THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER and **THE DARK CRYSTAL**: cinematographer Oswald Morris, B.S.C., who came out of retirement to accept the innovative assignment; executive producer David Lazer; film editor Ralph Kempen; special visual effects supervisors Brian Smithies and Roy Field; and production designer Harry Lange. While the two films represented a





THE SKEKSIS were performed as puppets by operators and cable crews concealed beneath the set. Shown at right is the Scientist, who drains life from the Pod villagers to keep his dying race alive. In full shots where the Skeksis are seen to move and walk, they are played by midgets in costume (inset). Four-foot tall Kirin Shah is shown in a costume test of the Skeksis' lizard-like tail. Shah also played Jen.



creature's four arms. The other arms were manipulated, when needed, by two other performers.

The Skeksis included the most complex of all the mechanized puppets, the Chamberlain, who gets stripped of his clothes and banished when his bid for power fails. The Chamberlain included 21 cable-activated parts controlling the movements of eyebrows, eyes, eyelids and beak either up or down or from side to side. Pneumatic controls underneath the chin provided a sneering lip movement. Other Skeksis characters, depending on their personality and importance to the storyline, had lesser degrees of articulation. The Historian was the simplest, with only two functions, an eye blink and left-to-right eye movement.

Lyle Conway supervised the construction of two sets each of the nine Skeksis characters. Sarah Bradpiece sculpted the body of the naked Chamberlain, which was cast in foam latex, and created the distinctive costumes for each of the nine characters. The puppet bodies of the remaining Skeksis were sculpted by Bradpiece directly in Scotfoam and attached to a lightweight aluminum and plastic framework. The Skeksis were hand puppets much like the Gellings. Operators credited in the cast list manipulated head and mouth movements with their right hand, while operating the puppet's left arm with their left hand. Additional technicians operated the other arm as well as cable controls for sophisticated facial and eye expression when called for.

"The gimmicks and mechanisms are great," said Conway. "But I'd sooner eliminate one than restrict a puppeteer from fully realizing his character. Henson's Kermit is a fine example. It has no moving eyes or mouth mechanisms, yet subtle movements of head and hands suggest a variety of emotion. It is a wonderful surprise—really

Christmas time—to turn a newly made puppet over to an operator and see what personality he or she gives it."

Large, heavy puppets like the Skeksis required some form of support other than the operator's arm. In the past, large Muppets had been built on backpacks, but that arrangement made it difficult for the operator to lift his or her arms to work the puppet. For *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, Henson came up with the idea of building the puppets on a harness, permitting the weight to be carried more easily on the hips. On Henson's suggestion, shop supervisor Sherry Amott located a Steadicam harness, modified it for use, and turned it over to the film's mechanical specialists to be manufactured in quantity. The Steadicam harness features a quick release mechanism that was particularly important to the production, as the creatures had to be easy to get out of in case of fire.

Fizzgig was constructed by Rolie Krewson in eight different versions, depending on the action called for in the script. Kira's fluffball of a pet was too tiny to contain all the mechanisms that were required. One puppet featured an eye blink, another had eyes that moved right to left. Two puppets fitted to the hand of operator Dave Goelz featured a large mouth lined with angry teeth. Goelz provided an amazing degree of personality to what is essentially a ball of fur. Two of the Fizzgigs are merely round balls for traveling shots, made to roll like tumbleweeds.

Krewson compares Fizzgig to Henson's first Kermit in that both characters are essentially simple

hand puppets, and both were made from old coats. (Kermit was made from a green coat Henson got from his mother, and Fizzgig was created from old fur coats because Krewson was sensitive to using the skins of endangered species.) Krewson took about a week to make each Fizzgig.

In addition to the Skeksis, Lyle Conway's group of three puppet makers, David Barclay, Tad Krzanowski and Graham Galvin, also fabricated Aughra and the urSkeks, the tall, white ethereal beings that result when the Skeksis and urRu merge at the film's denouement. Barclay sculpted the urSkeks from Conway's design, and four puppets were cast in foam latex and constructed. Blinking eyes are the urSkeks' only moving parts.

Aughra was the most complex puppet in the film, outside of the Chamberlain Skeksis, and is easily the most expressive and dynamic as performed by Frank Oz. Originally the character was to have been a masculine creature called Habidabat, more animal-like with crab pincers, a high forehead and whiskers. "I think she became a woman to add more feminine interest to the film," said Conway. "She also grew horns."

Oz operated Aughra as a hand puppet, his right hand controlling her head and mouth movement, his left hand her left hand. Another operator manipulated the right hand, and cable crews at a distance triggered mechanisms that made her eye blink and bulge and her eyebrows arch and frown. Aughra's disembodied eye was operated by Dave Goelz.

From Conway's sculptures Aughra's head, bust, hands and feet

were cast in foam latex. Her armatured body was very flexible, capable of walking, bending and squatting, with all movements transferred throughout realistic muscles scissored from Scotfoam. "Originally Froud had planned to give Aughra a wildly patterned frock, but felt it was too similar to the urRu," said Conway. "Under his supervision Graham Galvin designed the seedy little burgundy shift which now hugs her ample flesh."



The manufacturing process for most of the puppets seen in *THE DARK CRYSTAL*.

involved the use of foam latex "skins" attached to motivating mechanisms and stretched onto fiberglass skulls and metal armatures. Once a character's features are sculpted in oil-based clay, the sculptures are turned over to moldmaker Mike Osborne, who did the bulk of the molds for the film's major characters. Osborne casts a two-piece plaster mold which is returned to the sculptor, who then lines the mold with a layer of clay to a thickness desired for the foam skin. After testing to assure that the skin is thin enough to allow for realistic movement but thick enough to withstand the rigors of filming, the mold is returned to the moldmaker and a plaster core is cast. The mold is separated, the clay is peeled out and the mold and core are sent to Tom McLaughlin, head of foam skin casting.

McLaughlin was among the core group of seven technicians

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CONFESSIONS OF A CREATURE CRAFTSMAN

Puppetmaker Lyle Conway provides an inside view of the fun, hard work and magic of filming THE DARK CRYSTAL.



Sculptor Lyle Conway and his puppet of Aughra, the Keeper of Secrets from THE DARK CRYSTAL.

Lyle Conway worked on THE DARK CRYSTAL as a sculptor and creature designer for more than three years. A native of Chicago's Southwest Side, Conway credits the strange combination of Kukla, Fran & Ollie, King Kong and Peter Pan with interesting him in puppetry and fantasy cinema.

"When I was a little kid, one of my best friends was a puppet," he said. "But I've matured and learned since then. Now all of my best friends are puppets."

No one person on THE DARK CRYSTAL is responsible for a creature's success. Rather, it's a collaborative effort on the part of performers, costumiers, rubber makers, puppet builders and engineers.

I suppose I've worked harder on this film than I have on anything before. Three of us, my group, including Tad Krzanowski, David Barclay, and Graham Galvin, made 27 creatures in nine months. Hard, because you knew when you finished one or two you still

had 25 more to go.

There were times I'd overload, just sit at my table trance-like, not moving, jarred into consciousness again by birds outside the shop waking to the dawn. I'd go home for a few hours, hoping the good puppet fairy would come in and save my ass.

There were times, though, when things were going rough and then suddenly everything would mesh—like at five in the morning. In fact, I think something magic always happens

around that time, especially when you pull all-nighters. I really like it. It's such a special feeling: it's quiet in the shop and it makes you feel almost giddy. You just know the whole thing is going to work. I used to put on the kettle then go over and play with the mechanism on a puppet to reassure myself that it actually was working. When the tea was made, I'd turn out the lights and sit in the shop, which has this wonderful, 25-foot peaked ceiling with skylights. The sky would just begin

changing color as I finished my cup, then one more tug on the cable and I'd walk home across the heath.

The Saturday before the Skeksis were to shoot, on Monday, they scheduled a dress rehearsal with all performers and cable crew. I couldn't bear to watch—stayed nice and safe in my workshop. One by one, the dressers brought back the heads of the puppets in varying stages of disarray. Every single one was broken! I couldn't believe it and just sat there for a few minutes, looking at this mountain of heads, and broke down and cried. At that point I felt there was no way they were going to be ready on Monday. That was the most pressure I felt during the entire film. Just knowing that all the creatures in the next shot were your responsibility was awesome.

But it's funny how quickly you rally in situations like that. David Barclay and I spent most of the weekend at the studio and the heads were there Monday morning looking their most gruesome. And so did we!

The longer we worked on the creatures the more precious they became to us—so much so we found ourselves saying, "You mean people are going to put their hands in them—get them dirty? You must be joking."

Jim [Henson] came up to me one day and said, "Tomorrow we're going to plunge this head into a bucket of water—that's OK, isn't it?"

"Of course Jim, no problem, I said, and eased my way into my workshop to do a short, silent scream before trying to figure out how the puppet would endure that and still be ready for the afternoon close-up.

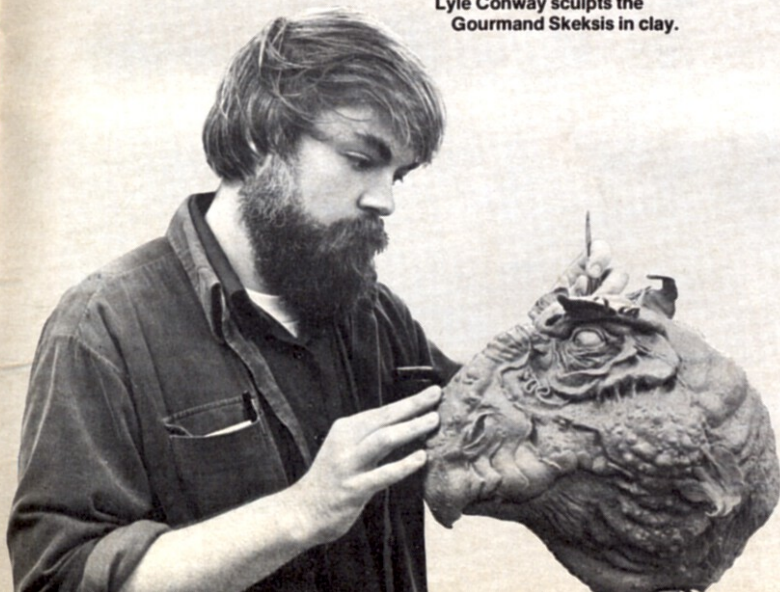
You see, even though there was the occasional duplicate, the performers weren't too eager to give up the "number one" heads for repairs. The dupe always felt



different—sometimes better, but always different. That's why you get a frame or two of skull showing through a rip—not because we didn't know it was there, but it had reached a point where no amount of on-the-floor patching and cosmetics could cover it.

In the beginning we were ever so careful with the Skeksis: white gloves, special bags, careful grooming. By the end of shooting, we couldn't care. They had become too much like *real* Skeksis—rotting rubber, permeated with cold KY jelly and putrifying noodles. Fortunately the banquet scene turned out to be the last

Lyle Conway sculpts the Gourmand Skeksis in clay.



Skeksis shot.

Aughra, however, was another matter. She was carefully looked after by her entourage. Wigmaker Stuart Artingstall set and combed out her hair twice a week.

Graham Galvin saw to her bodily functions and three of us would check her controls each night. As a reward for this attention, she showed no signs of temperament. She had just three mechanical problems on the floor, which didn't hold up shooting more than five minutes. To Tom McLaughlin and Sue Higgins' credit and relief, the one foam skin they made lasted her throughout the shoot. It was a big, difficult mold to fill and it was done with nary an air bubble.

One of our builders made a pod person that was beautifully mechanized. It could sit there by itself on a little chair, pick up a bottle, set it down on the table, take the cork out, pour a drink, re-cork it, pick up the glass and drink it. It was all very believable and realistic! Unfortunately, the story would have to come to a halt to allow him to do this little trick. Still, it's nice to know we could do it. It would be great to linger over something like that. But you can become too self-indulgent. And there was work to do.

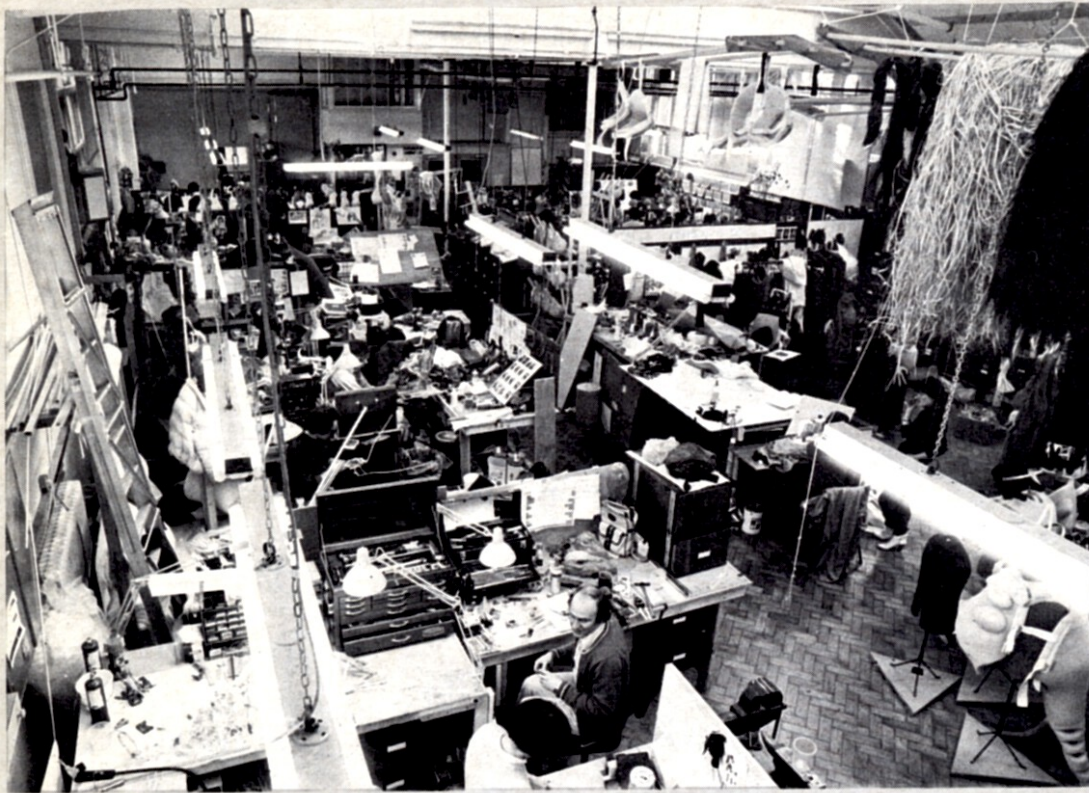
Frank Oz had a really good handle on his characters' personalities. He was especially helpful

CREATURE CRAFTSMEN

responsible for designing and building the puppet characters of **THE DARK CRYSTAL**, pose on a stairway in the Skeksis Council Chamber. Front Row (l to r): conceptual designer Brian Froud; Gelfling group leader Wendy Midener, who married Froud during filming; creative supervisor Sherry Amott; Sarah Bradpiece, Skeksis body and costume designer; Duncan Kenworthy, associate producer for the Henson Organization; Landstrider group leader Val Charlton. Back Row: Aughra and Skeksis group leader Lyle Conway; Garthim group leader Fred Nihda; Environmental Creatures group leader John Coppinger; and Tim Miller, who designed woodland creatures.

with the Chamberlain, whom he wanted to be really sleepy. "A real greaseball," Oz would say. He'd come around and do the expression and movement as he visualized the character. I think we captured it well. Originally he wanted it sculpted with a smile—but we talked about it and decided it might be nice to do it in a neutral position and mechanize it to smile and frown.

The first days shooting with Aughra was done about 25 feet off the ground, on her mountain. Three of us had to climb a steep ladder to the cliff where Frank was performing her and each of us was supporting some part of the puppet. Three times we got her up there and three times we had to bring her down, while, either the set, the camera or the lights was fixed. None of it was Frank's fault.



The Hampstead Heath workshop facility where a corps of designers and puppet craftsmen worked on *THE DARK CRYSTAL*.

By the fourth time, we were tired, hot, dirty and cranky. We got her on Frank and while the poor guy was waiting between takes—inside, completely cut off from the outside, in total darkness (his monitor was off)—this pitiful little voice came from deep within Aughra's bowels: "Is anyone out there?" I was inches from him but remained mute. "Is anyone out there?" Still nothing. There was a pause and finally he said, "Nope, I guess no one's out there." I almost weakened, but didn't.

Between shots, the performers would usually remain in their costumes. But sometimes these breaks would last up to 20 minutes. So to pass the time between takes, the operators began playing with things inside their puppets. You could hear little sounds emanating from within, clicking and spinning noises and then a hand might appear from under Aughra's dress with a hunk of metal, or a wing nut, or a strap. Then you would hear, "What's this?" or "It came off." Inevitably, it always came from some impossible location that only a contortionist could have reached.

Inspirations came from everywhere—we fed off each other, and friendships became very close. Wendy Midener (who sculpted the Gelflings) and Brian Froud (the conceptual designer) met on the movie and married! It was kind of like Jen and Kiral! They invited everyone working on the film at the time down to Dart-

moor, where Brian lives, for the wedding.

Dartmoor is a charming village whose surrounding countryside and moor have inspired not only Brian's work, but Conan Doyle's "Hound of the Baskervilles." Going for a hike there is like walking into one of Froud's paintings—great gnarled roots, rotting mills, dense lush carpets of mosses and a fog which can roll in and play havoc with your sense of direction.

There is even a young girl's grave by the side of the road which has always had fresh cut flowers on it for a few hundred years and no one knows where they come from. Also a large castle-like rock formation on the moor which people have climbed and come down in the fog speaking a different tongue. Hikers have gone out on the moor in the summer and have been found frozen. It's a constant battle with the elements—moss even grows on the inside walls. All of this has contributed to the land of Froud and was finally dimensionalized in *THE DARK CRYSTAL*.

A certain rivalry developed between the puppet-making groups. For example, on the pretense of borrowing something, we would wander into Garthim or Gelfling turf to check progress and make certain they weren't getting preferential treatment. It was good-natured and usually stopped short of anything physical. There were several all-out water fights, some lasting an hour or more, which usually started

tail. It proved a bit confusing, though; it was difficult to read the anatomy of the creature, and the head tended to get lost. It was a nice effect, though.

I think knowing the way the picture turned out—however you think that is—I'd still do it all again. When I see the film, though, I have no feelings about it. I think I'm still too close to it. I feel it takes years before anyone can look back at what they've done—in anything, not just filmmaking—and have an opinion. I don't look at it and think, "That's great," or "That's terrible." There's certainly nothing that I feel is embarrassing, but I can't look at it objectively. Within five or six months, I can't see the strengths and weaknesses of my work.

Jim [Henson] is warm and easygoing. He made *THE DARK CRYSTAL* a remarkable work experience. Due to Jim, there is a marvelous freedom to create in the organization. It must be like Hollywood's golden days, without the temperament. Jim sets that level by example. It was a very uncomfortable and demanding shoot for performers and crew, yet I never saw one show of temper. Everyone cooperated due to their faith in Jim.

He was filming *THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER* and finishing *THE MUPPET SHOW*'s last season while we were in preproduction, yet he always found time to check our progress, make suggestions, and in general help us get a grip on our characters. He also encouraged us to attend all aspects of the production, all rushes, assemblies, syncing, music recording—everything.

We were made to feel a part of the movie, and it's reflected in the pride everyone took with their particular area of responsibility. And, I think, it's reflected in the film.

with an "accidental" shot at someone with a plant sprayer. They would end with people getting hit with buckets of water.

One of my favorite images of Froud is Brian wearing a black plastic garbage bag slit open at the top for his head, running like the Devil after someone with water pistols in both hands blazing—er, dripping.

In New York, Brian was always shopping at Woolworths for strange toys—tops, soldiers, bowling pins, squirt guns—and when he was tired of playing with them they were glued onto a prototype Skeksis costume and painted. The costume had a wonderful look, all shimmering, like some enchanting fruit cock-

Conway and crew (David Barclay and Tad Krzanowski) joke with Brian Froud.



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who began working on *THE DARK CRYSTAL* in New York in 1978. A native New Yorker, McLaughlin joined the Muppets as a puppet maker on the basis of the puppets and masks he made as a sideline for sale to novelty stores. He was promptly shipped off to the University of Akron (the tire capital of the world) for an intensive program of study in rubber technology. McLaughlin flunked the course on how to make a car tire, but managed to produce 2,000 pieces of foam for use in *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, coming up with new foam latex mixtures specially suited for use in puppetry.

"Latex is the sap of the rubber tree, particles of rubber held in suspension by a covering of protein," said McLaughlin, providing a crash course in the secrets of rubber making. "A curing compound is added which gives the sap a 'memory' so that if you stretch it, it will return to its original shape. If rubber isn't cured, this won't happen. A foaming agent is added to produce foam latex, which holds air that is whipped into it. These ingredients are mixed together, rather like a meringue, and the mixture can be refined so the air cells are the correct size. A gelling agent turns this liquid into a semi-solid mass, suitable for injecting into molds. Then it is cooked."

Cooking in wet heat is the most efficient way of curing foam rubber, but requires the use of metal molds that can withstand boiling. Because metal molds are costly, plaster molds and dry heat were used due to the large volume of foam work called for in the film. The foam is whipped up in a battery of kitchen mixers, including one large industrial mixer for big jobs. When the foam is smooth, it is injected into the mold and baked for up to three hours. McLaughlin and partner Sue Higgins used seven ovens and had them baking 18 hours a day when filming became imminent.

Depending on the complexity of the mold, McLaughlin sometimes pushed the foam into tiny crevices and wrinkles by using a tool. "Lyle Conway likes modeling a lot of very fine detail," said McLaughlin of Aughra and the Skeksis. "But foam latex has the consistency of highly whipped cream and won't flow into nooks and crannies, wrinkles, eye bags and the like."

McLaughlin found the Gelflings, Jen and Kira, the most difficult to cast because their smooth skins had to be blemish free. "Air bubbles trapped on the surface would show and could not be repaired," he said. "The Skeksis had so much going on that if you did get an air hole, usually it wouldn't show."

For each character a base color and precise formula were developed to produce a skin that would



be consistent from cast to cast. McLaughlin's major task in producing the puppet skins was to balance plasticity—softness and flexibility—with strength. The skins are glued to mechanisms and moving parts; too plastic and they will tear in the middle of filming and have to be replaced with no guarantee of matching; too strong and they will appear rigid and unrealistic. The amount of air beat into the foam—its denseness—is the key. Of 14 skins McLaughlin cast for Aughra, Lyle Conway accepted only three as being suitable. "It was very upsetting," said Conway. "You would get a skin on the mechanism and find that it wouldn't work for a variety of reasons, the main one being that the foam was too dense."

McLaughlin followed a foam recipe patented by Dunlop which uses a micro-cellular foaming agent that produces a foam with air cells so tiny they are invisible to the naked eye. "We didn't want to experiment the way they did in the early days of car seat manufacture," said McLaughlin. "I've heard horror stories about people up to their knees in chemicals that wouldn't foam. Even today no one really knows or can agree on how or why the process works exactly."

McLaughlin has added a few refinements of his own to the process. Oil is often used as a plasticizer to make the foam soft and flexible. For puppet technology that makes skins difficult to glue onto the mechanisms, McLaughlin came

THE MYSTICS are essentially hand puppets with the operator fully enclosed, capable of walking while crouched in an uncomfortable and physically demanding position. The operator's right hand, inside the urRu Mystic's head, moves the mouth, while the left hand operates the forward left arm. Inset: Craftsman David Barclay laces a performer into the urRu's latex hand. A clever mechanism devised by Leigh Donaldson works off the performer's own fingers to bend the jointed fingers expressively.



up with a technique to get highly plastic foam without oil. He also developed a special curing agent that cut an hour and a half off the baking process.

Foam latex is most commonly used in films for prosthetic makeup work, but the volume of work produced for *THE DARK CRYSTAL* exceeded even mass makeup needs like those of *PLANET OF THE APES*. McLaughlin estimates he used about 10 55-gallon drums of latex base during the film, whipping up a total of 3,300 gallons of foam latex—about four tons of the stuff. Including his follow-up assignments on films like *KRULL* and *RETURN OF THE JEDI*, "THE DARK CRYSTAL is undoubtedly the most demanding film I've ever worked on," said McLaughlin. "We had a real bottleneck in the foam department. We had to make up for everybody's lost time. We were constantly working against the clock. We did a lot of foam work on *RETURN OF THE JEDI*, but *THE DARK CRYSTAL* really took the biscuit."



As *THE DARK CRYSTAL* geared up for filming, Jim Henson found he was unable to

spend as much time at the Hampstead Heath workshop as he would have liked. When the puppets began to take shape in metal, fiberglass and foam, Henson was busy directing *THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER* at EMI Studios in Elstree. Nevertheless, Henson still managed to spend about two days a week reviewing the work in progress and checking a multitude of details with Brian Froud and the army of craftsmen at work.

In addition to the main characters, the Hampstead Heath workshop was busy preparing a large supporting cast of puppet creatures. Shop supervisor Sherry Amott oversaw the construction of the Pod People, which were sculpted by Wendy Midener. Brian Froud had originally envisioned the heads of the kindly village people, who take in and protect the orphaned Kira, as potato shapes,



LANDSTRIDERS were the brainchild of Mystic performer Robbie Barnett (left), who demonstrated he could run on stilts. The creatures were sculpted by Valerie Charlton over life casts (right) of performers Hugh Spight and Swee Lim, then cast in plasterzote, a light, flexible material. A foam latex skin is bonded to flexible body-stocking material and stretched over all.



with "eyes" randomly positioned as if grown organically. This bizarre concept eventually gave way to a more human face, but still on a warm, lumpy potato-shaped head.

Polly Smith designed and manufactured clothes of raw silk for the Pod villagers, with a worn, earthy, ethnic cast, and Ellis Duncan made costumes for the Skeksis' Pod slaves, based on Froud designs which distinguished each with a motif that suited the slave's function at the castle: servant, musician or choir member. Long-time Henson associate Bob Payne, who plays the Skeksis Scroll Keeper, assembled the puppets, which were small hand-and-rod types, very much like Muppets, usually operated by only one performer.

For the Garthim, the brutal stormtroopers who carry out the Skeksis' dirty work, Froud took his inspiration from the insect world and designed beetle-like creatures with huge pincer claws. Fred Nihda took Froud's basic drawing and developed the final creature by sculpting in styrofoam and plasticene. Nihda began the work in December 1979 and worked nine months before the creature received Henson's stamp of approval for manufacture as a series of suits for filming. During this development period Nihda modified the Garthim design to satisfy script requirements, making it more upright and fast moving, giving it stomach claws to hold prey in a vice-like grip.

Nihda also supervised the assembly of the Garthim suits needed for filming. Each suit consists of 590 interlocking pieces, individually cast in fiberglass. To achieve the proper overlapping and interlocking shell system for the insect-like

creature, each piece was sculpted and cast in proper order of assembly before the next piece was sculpted to insure a proper fit. The legs and belly of the suit are mounted directly on the operator, with the back shell raised up on a harness-like mechanism. Garthim performers crouch forward with legs bent. The belly of the suit is strapped around the performer's legs. The performer's head fits inside the Garthim's head, and the hands reach to the elbow joints of the Garthim's front limbs. Garthim eyes, actually fragments of the Dark Crystal, light up and move from side to side, operated by remote control. Small mechanized claws on the stomachs of some suits were operated by a second performer when needed.

The Landstriders, the long-legged steeds which transport Jen and Kira and do battle with the Garthim, were the last creatures to be finalized before filming. Brian Froud had toyed with several unusual concepts for the creatures during preproduction in New York, but abandoned their development when nothing seemed to work.

"We had a group of mime artists and dancers who worked to create shapes and forms that I could base a creature on," said Froud. "They came up with some interesting ideas, but trying to enclose the performers within a skin with muscles to suggest a real creature proved to be an impossible task." Froud settled on making the creatures a kind of spider, capable of making long leaps through the air and, in effect, being able to fly, but no one liked the idea. No one could think of anything better, however, so the spiders, called "Land-Leapers," got built and tested once the production based in London.

"We had been agonizing for months about the Landstriders when suddenly the answer hit us like a blinding flash," said Henson. "One of our performers, Robby Barnett, was a stiltwalker." Barnett was asked to audition, to see if he could gallop on four stilts. "He tested for us in our rehearsal

room in London," said Froud. "It was in a church with a tiled floor, and it was terrifying watching him stagger about on 10-foot stilts with no rubber stops on the ends." When Barnett proved he could run, Froud came up with a Landstrider design, bringing down the stilts in size and giving them a forward stoop.

Valerie Charlton was hired to perfect and sculpt Froud's Landstrider in October 1980. She gave the creature an articulated skeleton with a flexible spine, moving rib cage, pelvis and leg tendons, attached to the performer's body to suggest anatomical realism. The creature's outside shape was cast in plasterzote, a light, flexible material connected to a fiberglass skull. An outside skin of textured foam latex was built onto flexible body stocking material and stretched over the plasterzote. Each suit, including four 48-inch carbon fiber stilts, was custom tailored for a perfect fit for each Landstrider performer.

The Landstrider's head fits onto the performer's head and is controlled by its movement. An earlier design, with the head on the end of a long neck, proved unworkable. Mechanized movement of eyes which blink and pivot, eyebrows,

snout and a spiked weapon which protrudes from above the lip, were manipulated by another operator using radio control.



With his cast of characters nearing completion and with his directing responsibilities on *THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER* and the Christmas holidays out of the way, Henson was ready to devote his full energies to filming *THE DARK CRYSTAL* at the beginning of 1981. With an April start date already set at EMI there was an enormous amount of last-minute preparation still to be done. Most of the principal filmmakers had also been working on *THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER* along with Henson, and were unable to begin preparing *THE DARK CRYSTAL* until that film was finished.

Production designer Harry Lange had to transform Brian Froud's conceptual designs into sets at EMI that would be practical for filming yet still retain the magic and wonder of Froud and Henson's fantasy world. No stranger to film magic, German-born Lange began his film career as one of three designers on Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* (1968), and has worked on *STAR WARS*, *MOONRAKER*, *SUPERMAN I & II*, and *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. "THE DARK CRYSTAL is without a doubt the most difficult film I have ever worked on," said Lange.

Besides sets, weapons, walking sticks, medallions, antique brocade tablecloths, bed spreads and cutlery, a seemingly endless and diverse list of requirements fell Lange's way and were produced as physical works of art. The knives, forks and spoons used during the Skeksis dinner party, for instance, were made of pewter and encrusted with crests and jewels. "This film was such a great challenge because everything had to be made from scratch," said Lange. "There

BRIAN FROUD (right) is the artist from Devon, England whose vision served to shape *THE DARK CRYSTAL*. Froud's major preproduction paintings, like that of the urRu (far right) defined key elements, but he depended mostly on quick pencil roughs to work out concepts and ideas with the filmmakers. Influenced by turn-of-the-century artists like Arthur Rackham and Dulac, illustrators of children's fairy tales, Froud specializes in rendering the characters of fantasy and folklore, tinged with his own style and imagination. His designs for the film are collected in "The World of the Dark Crystal," published by Alfred A. Knopf, 1982.





Kira is placed into position from beneath the set of the Crystal Chamber in readiness for operator Kathryn Mullen, during filming of Kira's death scene at the film's climax. Mullen (inset top) wears a costume that blends with that of the puppet. When four-foot square sections of the floor set are replaced (inset right), Mullen operates Kira through a hole from underneath.



wasn't a solitary thing we could hire or make out of something else. It obviously had to have a design continuity and it was up to me to design everything that way."

In the case of the Skeksis cutlery, all that attention to detail may have been overdone. The metal utensils proved to be useful only in distant and stationary shots since they were too heavy to be held up by the puppets' fingers. A duplicate set made of lightweight plastic was used for action shots.

Lange designed sets so they could be redressed and reused, a favored technique that results not only in economy but in higher quality sets. "For example, the Crystal Chamber was an incredibly expensive set to build," said Lange. "I designed it in such a way that if you closed the windows or hung down drapes in appropriate places, the set could become the banquet hall or the throne room. When you see the results you will never guess that it's the same set, though all three have the same basic conical shape.

"I would rather spend more on the detail and finish of a set and reuse it rather than build the sets separately," continued Lange. "If you can pay careful attention to the

plastering and painting it pays for itself in the mileage you can get out of it."

Another trick of the designing trade Lange used on *THE DARK CRYSTAL* involved making flat cutouts for features that would be seen from only one angle. "It's the look that's all important in a film like this," said Lange. "I spent time making flat, moveable cutouts look perfect rather than going to the expense of building things that won't show." Flat cutouts included the huts seen in exteriors of the Pod village.

The major set requirements Lange had to keep constantly in mind were that the sets had to be built 4.5 feet off the floor of the soundstage, and that one or any combination of four-foot square pieces could be removed for filming to allow for the operation of the

puppet characters. Puppets are held aloft on the arms of operators with hands over head, making it necessary for the operators to stand roughly 4.5 feet beneath the floor of the set. "Some of the performers were of differing heights," said Lange, "so that had to be catered to as well."

Four square feet of set floor space is removed for each character to allow room for maneuvering, for mechanics and additional operators for each puppet and for a video monitor needed by each operator to watch the performance he is giving. Lange built the sets in four-foot modules composed of steel stanchions imported from the United States. The stanchions were composed of metal tubes with top cross-channels to platform timber on.

"The modules were very strong,"



said Lange. "The beauty of them was that they were quick and easy to remove. We didn't want to waste any precious time. On one set we had the floor covered with stone slabs which were virtually unbreakable. When we needed module removed, the slabs were taken up, stacked in a corner and relaid when needed with sand sprinkled between the cracks. The stone slabs were a relatively easy exercise. On *THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER* we had wall-to-wall carpet that had to appear seamless when modules were removed and replaced!"

Lange had little difficulty carrying out Brian Froud's design concepts and giving the production a design continuity. "Froud's work is really based on Celtic designs with a few new innovations added," said Lange, who found it unnecessary to consult with Froud.

"I suppose that's a fair appraisal," admits Froud, who in retrospect would have liked to have been more involved in the film's production design. "I steal from everywhere. I trace out of all the best books! I had never done production design before so a real professional was needed. You have to make decisions based on factors like expense or the fact that the set is going to be seen from only one angle. Lange seemed to be able to





Jen falls asleep in Kira's arms outside the Gelfling ruins, an example of cinematographer Oswald Morris' use of colored gels and filters to overlay sequences with hues characteristic of the mood and setting.

take what I had dreamed up and make it practical."

Most of the sets were built full scale. Only the village of the Pod People and the Gelfling ruins were designed to the slightly smaller scale of these puppets, which were about three feet tall. Occasionally sets were modified to suit requirements which weren't planned. For example, when Henson decided to shoot the Crystal Chamber from 18 feet in the air, looking down, Lange camouflaged the top half of the set by using pieces of other sets.

"It was a hard film to do, but no problem was insurmountable," said Lange. "I'm glad to have been part of such a highly unusual and experimental film. No one ever attempted anything like this before. I don't expect anyone ever will again."



THE DARK CRYSTAL began filming on May 4, 1981, at EMI Elstree studios, after 12 weeks of rehearsal. Jean Pierre Amiel, a

Swiss mime, trained puppet operators in hand and body movement. "It's one thing to have a hand pick something up, but quite another when two performers are responsible for that action," said co-producer Gary Kurtz of the need for the lengthy rehearsal period. (Amiel, who studied under Marcel Marceau, had been hired in June 1980 to audition and develop a dozen performers for roles as urRu, Skeksis, Garthim and Landstriders. Amiel himself plays the urRu

weaver and one of the leading Garthim in the film.)

Despite four years of extensive pre-production there was still a last-minute panic when shooting actually began. Brian Froud found he had little time to watch the filming. "There was always a mad dashing about," he said. "Designs, colors, the aging of props and costumes, a great deal of things had to be checked and approved."

Filming **THE DARK CRYSTAL** was a logistical nightmare. Literally every shot in the film is a special effect by definition, with puppet performers beneath the set and additional operators crouched out of camera range often connected to the puppet by cables. Because of the complex mechanics involved, often three or four operators were needed to manipulate each character. When six or seven

creatures appear on screen at one time, a frequent requirement, the enormous problems involved became apparent.

Each puppet character had one key performer, who had the responsibility of rehearsing and coordinating all the operators working on his character. The key performer operated the mouth and recited dialogue even though voice characterizations were to be post-synchronized later using other actors.

"When there were nine Skeksis in the council chamber, 45 performers were hiding out of sight," said sculptor Lyle Conway. "A great deal of the film's budget went into hiding those people. I was on the floor every day, just in case there were any finishing touches that needed to be done on any of my creatures—like the corners of the

mouth, which needed constant attention due to wear and tear. I never ceased to be amazed at the number of performers out on the set who simply vanished when you saw the rushes from the camera's point of view."

Special effects are costly because they take a long time to set up and a long time to rehearse due to their complexity. For this reason effects are often shot by small second unit crews which can proceed at a leisurely pace without undue expense. **THE DARK CRYSTAL** had no such luxury. The bulk of its 90 minutes of footage was shot by the main unit with a full crew, and production costs piled up at a rate of \$3.34 every second. Beyond getting each scene to work, the filmmakers found there was little time to refine the action or spend making each little movement count. "It was a challenge that seemed worth the effort," said Kurtz about the non-stop effects filming. "For the most part, we succeeded."

An elaborate video support system was rigged for the puppet operators and for co-directors Jim Henson and Frank Oz to monitor the action being filmed. A prism in the Panavision camera served to record the action on film or video, or both. The wide-screen Panavision image was transmitted to video monitors for the directors and cinematographer. Video cameras on a separate system isolated close-up images of each puppet which were transmitted to small three-inch video monitors strapped to the chests of key operators, and to monitors on additional operators or with cable and radio control crews placed at a distance from the main

MATTE PAINTINGS for **THE DARK CRYSTAL** were produced at ILM in San Rafael, California. Shown below is Chris Evans' painting of a rocky cliff ledge along which the urRu march on their way to the Skeksis castle. Live action footage of the urRu is composited into the dark area at center right. Other paintings were completed by ILM artist Michael Pangrazio (right), shown rendering one of the film's mattes on a 2½' x 6' pane of glass.



action. Ian Kelly, one of the unsung heroes of the production, supervised this sea of scan lines. In addition to playing back takes to check for a print, Kelly also monitored second unit filming on video for playback to Oz and Henson in between first unit takes. The floor of the set was a snake pit of criss-crossing video cables due to British law which prevents broadcast on a closed circuit.

Making matters even more hectic, directors Oz and Henson were often inside their own puppet characters supervising puppet crews from their close-up monitor while directing the scene as a whole. "It really was complicated," said Oz. "But no matter how daunted I felt, I always got a surge of excitement the moment I got on the studio floor. Jim and I both had earpieces connecting us to our first assistant director and we both had microphones so we could talk to each other at all times. The other performers had ear sets, too, so Jim and I could relay instructions." Henson and Oz didn't split the directing chores, but instead collaborated on each shot.

Oz, who played Aughra and the Chamberlain Skeksis, found wearing two hats was often frustrating. "When I was in character I wanted to be outside thinking about the shot, and vice-versa," he said. "It was disconcerting to be thinking about the lighting when I knew I really should have been channeling my energy into the manipulation of the puppet."

Since *THE DARK CRYSTAL* puppets were designed for safety and comfort, with quick release mechanisms in case of fire or injury, Oz could get out of his puppet on a moment's notice when he was directing. "We got the time down to two minutes to get him into Aughra, and just seconds to get him out," said sculptor Lyle Conway.

"The puppets are incredibly limited," said Henson. "No one can appreciate that unless they had been on the studio floor and



Co-director Frank Oz and continuity girl Cheryl Leigh go over a scene with midget Mike Edmonds as Aughra, after reviewing the previous take on the video monitor in the foreground. Oz played Aughra during puppet scenes.

watched them in operation. Most of the puppets exist only from the waist up. Angles other than waist shots are very complicated. You can do some things with a full figure like Aughra, using a lot of disguise and careful placement where the operator comes up through the set. You have to move the camera a lot so one is not made aware of the inherent limitations."

It's not all puppet work, however. Full figure shots of Aughra and the Skeksis perambulating about are accomplished with midgets in suits. The walking Skeksis were played by midgets Peter Burroughs, Malcolm Dixon, Sadie Corrie, Deep Roy, Jack Purvis (the show business partner of *R2D2*'s Kenny Baker), Gerald Stradden, Mike Cottrell, John Cha-

van and Lisa Esson. Aughra's locomotion was courtesy of Mike Edmonds. Edmonds, Purvis and Dixon are better known as *THE TIME BANDITS*, midget looters of the universe from last year's fantasy hit. Jen was also played by midget Karin Shaw in sequences requiring physical prowess.

Youngsters Abbie Jones and Natasha Knight play Jen and Kira, respectively, in long shots. Unlike Aughra and the Skeksis, the human-powered Gelflings are obviously actors in makeup because they differ greatly in shape and movement from the Gelfling puppets. All the little people in suits are listed among the film's credits only as "additional performers."

The heads of the Skeksis and Aughra suits lacked the capability of expressive movement. The heads pivoted on a spring mechanism so they would move naturally from side-to-side and up-and-down when the performers walked. Midgets in the Skeksis costumes could make the mouths flap by moving their heads up and down inside the suits. Henson used the suited actors for establishing master shots, covering all the action in a scene in full-figure long shots, then edited-in close-ups of the fully mechanized puppets for dialogue and expressive action.

"The editing was not dictated by where we *wanted* to cut," said Henson. "Changing faces and close-ups on hands had to be next to invisible to keep the illusion going. Usually there was only one place we could cut."

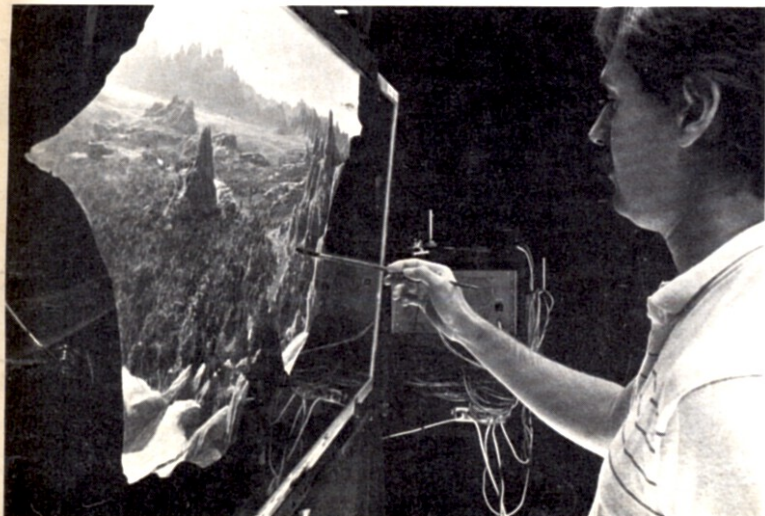


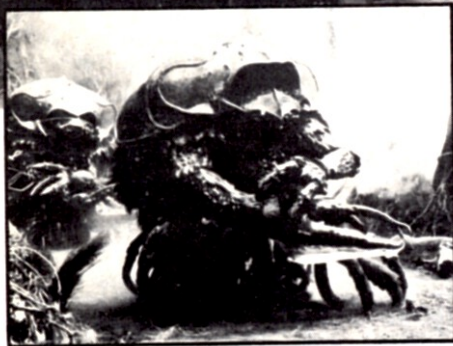
In addition to co-writing, co-producing and co-directing the film, Henson undertook one of the most

difficult characters to perform, Jen, the film's Gelfling hero. The least interesting and believable of the film's puppets because of its very human-like design, the role was one Henson came to regret.

"Jen was murder," Henson said. "For the first third of the filming I was terribly unhappy with my performance. I was constantly frustrated by what I felt were the character's shortcomings. Jen wasn't a rich character. Like Luke Skywalker, he is a benign character around which the story revolves. Conceptually, his neutrality has to be accepted. I was right for the part, but muppeteer Dave Goetz could have done it just as easily. I kept saying to him all the way through the shooting, 'Why didn't you do this?'"

Kathryn Mullen played Kira to Henson's Jen and wrestled with the same thorny problems of characterization. "It was hard to be as subtle as one needed to be," said Mullen. "Kira didn't have a face that did much. There was a smile, a frown, eyes that opened and closed. To make the character real you almost had to depend on puppetry. The face just didn't convey emotion. Often I'd have to play an emotion and wouldn't have a move for it. I'd experiment, and six takes later, I'd figure out how to do it. Half the time it was too late. We'd moved on to another shot."





GARTHIM group leader Fred Nihda assembles one of the Skeksis' insect-like men-at-arms (inset). Hanging from the walls are finished fiberglass shells (top right) and molds for some of the creature's 590 interlocking parts. Nihda's shop often looked like a Detroit auto plant.

The Gelfling puppets featured radio-controlled mechanisms for their limited range of facial expressions, manipulated by two operators, a distance away, observing the performance on a close-up TV monitor. The use of radio control was a new step in the development of Muppet technology, freeing the operator from the physical restrictions of bulky cable connections.

"The difference is like night and day," said Mullen, Kira's operator. "A cable head has big fat cables down the back with three people hanging onto them. With radio control, I'm totally free. I don't have to worry about people falling and running after me. The radio control operators don't have to worry either. Their concentration goes into the performance."

More human than the other puppets in the film, the Gelflings were made up prior to shooting, like regular actors. Sculptor Wendy Midener perfected a mixture of paint and makeup that soaked into the latex and stained it rather than

remaining on the surface. "It was difficult to find something that wouldn't crack off during manipulation," said Midener. "It took us ages to find the right mixture. Latex is similar to skin in tone and consistency, and it was just like putting makeup on a human face. The puppets held up really well. I think the puppeteers were careful because I was always on the studio floor, hovering, ever watchful!"

Filming *THE DARK CRYSTAL* was not only a complicated business, but physically strenuous for the puppet performers, particularly those enclosed inside body puppets like the urRu Mystics, the Garthim and the Landstriders. "I think it was Henson's calm temperament that got a lot of us through the picture," said sculptor Lyle Conway, who described Henson's mood on the sets as "imperturbable."

"The Mystics had to bend over in a squat position," said Conway. "The Garthim costumes were a fiberglass and steel rod fabrication that weighed at least 80 pounds. But

nobody ever complained. Everyone realized Jim was going through just as much agony as they were, so there wasn't a murmur."

Performer Brian Muehl, who played both Garthim and Mystics as well as the Skeksis Ornamentalist, found the Mystics to be the most difficult of the body puppets. Muehl and other Mystic performers used a video monitor only for close-ups. In long shots and in exteriors filmed on the EMI backlot and in Yorkshire, the performers walked blindly, operating the head and one arm with each hand while perfecting a walk while in a squat position. "Even in closeups with the monitor you're straining just to keep everything steady," said Muehl.

Though the Garthim suits were much bulkier and heavier, Muehl found the brute strength needed to move them was a much easier task due to a more natural body posture, a simple forward crouch. Like the urRu, the Garthim also required a subtlety of movement, but of a different kind.

"What makes the Garthim scary is if the audience can see its weight," said Muehl. "You have to create the illusion that they are four times heavier than they are. That's true mime, creating illusion. If we move too fast, the suits merely look like the lightweight fiberglass that they are."

For the Landstriders, because of the difficulty of performing fast action on stilts, stop motion animation was briefly considered as a means of bringing them to life. It was decided that the creatures would be filmed live, in full scale suits because the look of stop motion would not have been compatible with that of all the other creatures seen in the film.

"That decision wasn't based on economics, but the overall philosophy behind the film," said co-producer Gary Kurtz, who directed some of the second-unit work involving the battle between the Garthim and Landstriders. "We wanted to use techniques that were familiar to the film and avoid the use of opticals that would have been restricting on the set and required the use of storyboards."

Because of the danger involved, Landstrider performers Hugh Spight and Swee Lim had to be protected with a flying harness and safety line. For galloping and fight scenes, the wire traveled along the overhead on an enormous crane during filming on the EMI backlot.

"I wanted it done this way [as opposed to the use of stop motion animation] because effects happening live on camera provide so much more believability," said Henson.

Designer Brian Froud agreed. "On screen the Landstriders are simply magical," he said about seeing his designs brought to life. "I really feel something inside me when I watch them run."

The film's sets were large and dif-

icult to work on because they were built up off the studio floor and were seldom complete, usually with one or more modules removed for puppet manipulation. Aughra's observatory, the Orrery, was by far the most dangerous set because its mechanical model of the universe rotated at a fast clip and could inflict a nasty injury if someone got in its way.

"It was a very hard set to block-out action on," said sculptor Lyle Conway. "As you walked around you had to keep ducking, checking behind, below, and in front of you because of the Orrery's eccentric motion."

During filming on the observatory set one crewmember would monitor movement of the Orrery during the shot and yell "duck" to performers in jeopardy. On one take, Frank Oz missed his cue to duck and the sickle edge of the Orrery caught Aughra by the horn, pulling Oz out of the puppet and ripping Aughra's horn in half, along with her wig in a crunching and wrenching sound. Oz was unharmed. The puppet was not.

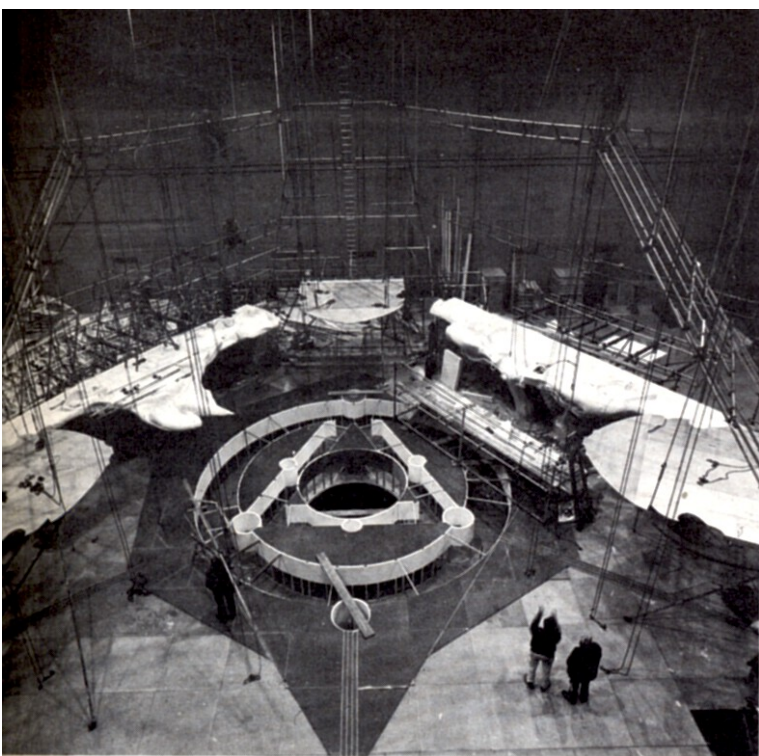
"Aughra had suffered some nasty-looking damage," said sculptor Lyle Conway, who was standing at the ready on the set for just such an event. "Fortunately the repairs were only cosmetic. Using hot glue, we had Aughra back together for her close-up in no time. Throughout the film—eternal flame-like—our glue guns were never cold."



Filming at the same time with the main unit was a special effects unit under

the direction of Brian Smithies. Since puppet mechanics were provided by specialists in Henson's Muppet organization, Smithies' primary role was filming miniatures and matte work, with optical compositing handled by Roy Field. The only exception was a certain amount of engineering that Smithies' team provided for some of the environmental puppets which served as background elements in some shots. Other mechanical chores on set included providing the plumbing for waterfalls and devising the clockwork mechanism for Aughra's Orrery.

Smithies trained as a sculptor and began work in effects under Derek Meddings on the British puppet television show *THUNDERBIRDS* in the mid-sixties. After a long association with Meddings on films like *THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT* and *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE*, Smithies got the chance to supervise when Meddings was forced to leave *SUPERMAN* for a prior commitment when that film ran over schedule. Smithies has since worked on *DRACULA*, *CLASH OF THE TITANS* and *THE*



The set of the Crystal Chamber under construction at EMI Elstree Studios. The finished set is shown centerspread. The set is divided into easily removable four foot squares to allow puppeteers to stand beneath the set, which is built 4½ feet off the stage floor. With redressing, the set also served as the Skeksis throne room and banquet hall.

GREAT MUPPET CAPER.

Smithies' major miniature sequences involved exterior and interiors of the Skeksis' castle. A four-foot miniature was designed by Brian Froud and set in a large desolate landscape which occupied an entire soundstage. "Froud was always amenable to suggestions," said Smithies. "But they had to fit in with his broad imagery. It was my idea to take the initial bland appearance of the Skeksis castle and give it the festering look of a splinter in an open boil."

For the film's opening shot, a slow pan toward the castle in the distance, Smithies rigged quartz lights connected to a wiper board to create the effect of "lightning bolts traveling across the ground." Never explained in the film, the electrical discharges were to suggest that the castle was sucking-in energy, causing the desolation around it. Smithies filmed the shot in several passes with a high speed camera shooting at 360 frames per second. The dark, turbid skies were added optically.

For the film's climax, Smithies built a large quarter scale miniature of the Skeksis Crystal Chamber. The sequence called for the encrusted accumulation of Skeksis crud to crumble away from the crystal walls to reveal the beauty of the chamber as it was before the Skeksis came to power. Smithies built the miniature in glass, then lined the walls with hollow, brittle plaster blocks of Skeksis decor. Since the crystal walls were to be lit from behind to make them appear to

glow, nothing holding up the crumbling plaster could be seen to remain. Smithies attached the plaster blocks with thin wires tied back to structures out of the way of the lighting. Detonators caused the wires to short circuit and burn through, causing everything to fall away, including the detonators which became indistinguishable among the rubble.

"I was hoping against hope that in the three weeks it took to dress the set, none of the lights would go out of alignment," said Smithies. "It was a cameraman's nightmare with everyone clambering about. We could only do one take." For closeups of the exterior of the Skeksis castle during the climax, Smithies built a big, 12-foot miniature with only a small patch of sur-

rounding desert. Identical with the smaller model, the large miniature featured walls that were rigged to fall away and reveal gleaming crystal turrets beneath.

Smithies worked most closely with co-producer Gary Kurtz, who used the expertise gained on two STAR WARS films to marshal the effects of THE DARK CRYSTAL. To augment landscapes built as sets or filmed on location, Smithies preferred the use of capping miniatures because they provide greater dimensional realism than matte paintings. "The final shot of the crystal palace now returned to its former glory, centered in a lush plain, is the film's only matte painting," said Smithies. No doubt the effects supervisor was surprised to learn on viewing the film that Kurtz had commissioned several others.

The matte paintings of THE DARK CRYSTAL were completed at ILM, Industrial Light & Magic, the effects company in northern California co-owned by Kurtz and George Lucas. Michael Pangrazio and Chris Evans painted the shots, which were photographed by cameraman Neil Krepela and Craig Barron beginning in October 1981. Over a four-month period, the ILM team completed seven shots at a time when the company was also working on the effects of ET, STAR TREK II and POLTERGEIST.

Chris Evans painted three landscapes through which the urRu Mystics travel to reach the Skeksis castle: the edge of a rocky cliff overlooking a jungle-filled valley; a field of heather with a range of mountains in the background; and a barren, rocky desert terrain with the Skeksis castle in the distance. Live-action plates of the urRu Mystics were filmed in England. The

field of heather for example, is located just outside the EMI Elstree studios, with the painted mountains replacing the studio buildings in the background.

"THE DARK CRYSTAL is one of the more ambitious films I've done in landscapes," said Evans. "I was synthesizing different landscape forms into something new and fantastic. For reference, I kept in mind some of the more dramatic mountain and jungle geography of South America. Gary Kurtz gave us simple line drawings from which we did production paintings for his approval. The final matte paintings were done using the production paintings as a guide."

Mike Pangrazio extended a studio set cliff face onto which Jen is climbing by painting the bottom of the cliff and the valley below, complete with a winding river. Pangrazio also painted a river valley seen by Jen as he climbs through a rock gap. The paintings are two and a half by six feet in size and done on glass.

"It's an excellent surface to work on unless you drop it," said Pangrazio. "Fortunately, that hasn't happened yet. We paint on glass so that areas of the painting can be cut away allowing us to project the live action plate from behind. We then photograph the painting and the plate as separate passes. We work very impressionistically, yet on film the work appears tight and photographic."

The matte painting which ends the film is a shot of the Skeksis

Marcus Dods conducts the London Symphony Orchestra at Anvil Abbey Road Studios in London. Inset: Composer Trevor Jones (r) reviews the score with Dods.





castle, now crystalline, set in a verdant green landscape beside a sparkling lake with three suns overhead. The shot wasn't conceived until July 1982, and resulted from a screening of the movie Henson held for the crew in London. At dinner following the film the conversation turned to what the Skeksis valley would have looked like after the transformation of the castle, if it had been shown. Brian Froud hastily sketched a concept on his dinner napkin, which was forwarded to Gary Kurtz, who turned the assignment over to ILM. A background plate of the glistening lake was shot at a river near San Rafael, and Mike Pangrazio was still working on the painting as late as this past September.



With filming completed and postproduction effects underway, Henson and editor Ralph Kempen prepared a cut of the picture to be scored with

music and previewed in test markets. The music was supplied by young composer Trevor Jones, hired by Henson in February 1980, two months prior to the start of principal photography. Henson had read about Jones' work for director John Boorman, adapting the themes of Richard Wagner for EXCALIBUR. Henson wanted a symphonic score for THE DARK CRYSTAL, but one that featured an unusual timbre and sound.

"I'd been experimenting with synthesizers and medieval instruments, so I suggested a fusion of all three," said Jones. "The point was to try and be as inventive as we could but not lose the audience. We started with individual sounds and related those to a symphonic idiom. A film this enormous had to be provided with that sort of symphonic backcloth."

Jones' first assignment was to score six pieces of music for playback use on the studio set during filming. These included pieces like the Pod People dance number and

the dirge of the Skeksis funeral ceremony. Jones was provided detailed background information on the production, characters and story for inspiration. "Those pieces of music were difficult to write," said Jones. "Obviously I hadn't seen a frame of film. I had to score from my own preconceived images."

After two and a half years of following the course of the production, the physical aspect of scoring the film took only a matter of days. "I came up with an overall main theme that I felt would apply to the fantasy feel of the film," said Jones. "These four opening notes for me, as a chord, evoked just the right feeling." Jones mapped out his score on a large wall in his home, writing down a clinical analysis of every character and each event in the film, defining precisely at the outset what he planned to do musically.

As the scoring progressed, Jones would play his themes and leitmotifs for Henson and Kurtz. "It's very

hard for them to bridge the gap between what I'm playing for them on a piano and what I hear orchestrally in my head," said Jones. "You sit there holding a C note which dies away after three seconds and you know the strings will be hovering in there, but they can't hear that. They have to have faith in your sensitivity and judgment. What I had to be careful about was not making my music as innovative as the images they accompany, otherwise the communication with the audience would have been lost. It was a knife edge to walk."

Jones is serious about film music. While a student at the University of York, England, Jones became dissatisfied that no training was available in film music composition. With the help of an understanding resident professor, Jones structured his own four-year course of study in film scoring. As a branch of Britain's National Film Theatre, the university was a perfect avenue for film study. Film prints were made available which

Filming a close two-shot of Jen and Urzah the urRu in Mystic Valley. Crouched low and operating Jen are (l to r) associate producer Duncan Kenworthy on ears, Steve Whitmire on right arm, Wendy Midener on eyes, Jim Henson with right arm up the puppet controlling body, head and mouth moves, and Kathryn Mullen on left arm. Henson would normally operate the left arm but is using that arm to brace himself in this set-up. The urRu, which consists only of a neck and head, is operated by Brian Muehl, with cable controls for eyes & eyebrows in the hands of Swee Lim at Muehl's right. Note that all performers have eyes glued to three video monitors of the performance in right foreground. An isolation video camera at far right focuses in on Jen and is fed to the two smaller closeup monitors. The large monitor shows the scene as viewed through the Panavision camera directly above. Inset: the mechanical arm developed by Leigh Donaldson is operated by Whitmire in this set-up. Note how the cable mechanism connected at the wrist is concealed by a flap of costume that extends down.



duplicate the release strategy of STAR WARS and hopefully its success, THE DARK CRYSTAL was previewed before a demographically selected test audience in Washington, D.C. Henson and representatives of Universal Pictures, the film's distributor, were stunned by the high number of walkouts and the overwhelmingly negative audience response. The film, after years of planning, preparation and production—at a cost of \$26 million—was in deep trouble.

Universal announced that the film's release had been postponed, but named no new date. They cited stiff competition from a crowded field of other summer films as the reason for the delay, a clumsy story since Universal had launched an elaborate trailer campaign promoting the summer release date less than a month earlier. Word of the film's disastrous preview soon spread.

The version of THE DARK CRYSTAL previewed in Washington was not complete, lacking titles and some optical effects, but the preview audience shrank from the film not because of its unfinished form, but because of its plodding pace and confusing storyline. A large part of the confusion resulted from Henson's decision to have the Skeksis speak a foreign language, specially devised by linguist Alan Garner based on ancient Greek and Egyptian.

"My whole approach to this film was visual," said Henson. "I wanted as little dialogue as possible because I believe the story is stronger that way. Dialogue becomes a crutch. If you have all these alien-looking creatures, why should they be talking English? An early concept was to have the Skeksis just making noises, but in a way that you knew what they were saying."

"The Washington audience thought they were missing something," said co-producer Gary

Kurtz. "Actually, they didn't need to understand the Skeksis' dialogue at those points. The translation of what was being said is really quite banal. The strength of those scenes was instinctively knowing what's going on. It's like the scene in ONE EYED JACKS, when Katy Jurado talks to her father. The scene is in Spanish, but you know what they are talking about. The two Skeksis scenes in question in THE DARK CRYSTAL were quite long. You had to concentrate. The audience wasn't prepared to do that."

Jim Henson went back to the drawing board. Though Henson preferred Alan Garner's Skeksis language, he decided to reloop the dialogue in English, adding choice one-liners in the process. Though the action on screen remained the same—no re-shooting was done—the English dialogue skewed the proceedings away from the purely bizarre and grotesque toward the more familiar comedic territory of the Muppets. Henson also added lightness and humor to the characterization of Aughra, bringing in actress Billie Whitlaw to re-record the dialogue with a new emphasis.

With editor Ralph Kempen, Henson trimmed the film from 101 minutes to 94 minutes, picking up the tempo. By intercutting scenes of the Skeksis and the urRu which had run uninterrupted before, Henson enlivened the sluggish pace of the film's opening, while shortening the action. In the contest for the Skeksis throne, for example, the Chamberlain and the Garthim Master each strike the ceremonial stone with their swords three times instead of once, and the Chamberlain actually appears to be winning at one point.

Henson also added voice-over narration to make THE DARK CRYSTAL, crystal clear, in effect telegraphing the film's climactic revelation that the Skeksis and urRu are two halves of the same being. By removing this element of surprise from the film's climax Henson took away the only saving grace of an already ill-conceived and weak ending.

The shortening, the re-editing,



Wigmaker Stuart Artingstall trims Jen.

and the re-looping made THE DARK CRYSTAL a much more commercial film, but not necessarily a better one. Missing in the new version is much of the darkness and the drama that was there before to counterbalance the charm and the cuteness. In the scene set in the Pod village, in the first preview cut, when Jen and Kira are having a merry time, Jen asks, "How long can we stay here?" and Kira answers, "As long as we want." The dialogue suggests that Jen has given up his quest, because as it takes place he is snatched away to dance and sing with the Poddlings. The dialogue is missing from the re-edited version, though the action is the same.

As originally conceived by Henson, THE DARK CRYSTAL was such a radical departure, not so much because of its technological embellishments but because of its serious dramatic tone, a thrust that was severely compromised in the re-editing process.

As Henson cut and rearranged THE DARK CRYSTAL, composer Trevor Jones had to cut and rearrange his music to fit, agonizing over every missing note. "You have to do what is termed 'tracking'" said Jones. "It's a terribly tedious process, chopping magnetic tape, manually, with a blade. For example, you are in a musical sequence that is in A minor for five bars, modulating to F over two bars. Say this latter two-bar modulation is cut, which is what you do in tracking. That means the score goes to G sharp or some other note without rhyme or reason, which musically is hash. You try like hell to come out with a score that sounds like the original, with the same intentions, but inevitably the music has to suffer. The music seems to fit, so no one knows except me that it's now a bare account of the original score."

The new and improved version of THE DARK CRYSTAL was first previewed in Detroit July 11 to a much better reception. The film

Jones would analyze on an editor for their audio-visual chemistry. A four-year, post-graduate course followed at Britain's National Film School where Jones learned the theory behind scripting, directing and motion picture photography. "I think I'm the only composer who can walk on a set and know what everybody is doing," said Jones. "Directors can relate to me as a filmmaker rather than just a musician."

THE DARK CRYSTAL became for Jones an enormous musical undertaking. In addition to scoring the movie, Jones also scored music for exhibitions, a fashion show, trailers and promotional reels, more than three hours of music for a 90-minute film.

"The standard of film music should equal the standard of the visual material," said Jones. "Usually that doesn't happen. Producers don't know music and often they are taken for a ride. I'm not saying I've achieved that standard, but it's something I aspire to. A lot of scores just get churned out."

Trevor Jones' score for THE DARK CRYSTAL is available as a soundtrack album,—the composer's first recording. The London Symphony Orchestra has also chosen a suite of Jones' music for the film as a selection in their concert tour. But for Jones, the greatest reward is the work itself.

"It's a total high all the time," he said. "It all boils down to me, the pencil and a piece of paper. And if I don't like what I've written, then it's no bloody good. The buzz I get going into a recording studio and hearing the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Marcus Dodds and performing my compositions, is reward enough. It's gratifying to know that an audience is listening and that my music has contributed in a positive way to the film's success."

Fizzgig, Kira's fluffball pet, with a Pod baby.



THE DARK CRYSTAL

A Universal Pictures release. 12/82, 94 mins. In color, 70mm and Dolby stereo. Directed by Jim Henson and Frank Oz. Screenplay by Henson and Odell. Story by Henson. Produced by Henson and Gary Kurtz. Executive producer, David Lazer. Director of photography, Oswald Morris. Conceptual designer, Brian Froud. Production designer, Harry Lange. Edited by Ralph Kemplen. Music by Trevor Jones. Associate producer, Bruce Sharman. Assistant director, Dusty Symonds. Special visual effects, Roy Field, Brian Smithies. Special sound effects, Ben Burt. Supervising art director, Charles Bishop. Art directors, Terry Ackland-Snow, Malcolm Snow, Brian Ackland-Snow. Set decorator, Peter Young. Operating cameraman, Derek Browne. Property master, George Ball. Associate producer (Henson Organization), Duncan Kenworthy. Continuity, Cheryl Leigh. Choreography and mime training, Jean-Pierre Amiel. Second unit director, Gary Kurtz. Unit publicist, Ann Tasker. Miniature effects director, Brian Smithies. Director, miniature effects supervisor, Paul Wilson. Mechanical effects supervisor, Ian Wingrove. Optical printing supervisor, Richard Dimbleby. Matte paintings, Mike Pangrazio, Chris Evans. Sound editor, Nicholas Stevenson. Music editors, Michael Clifford, Dina Eaton. Assembly film editor, Marcel Durham. Dialogue editor, Brian Mann. Optical editorial coordinator, William Webb. Dialogue supervisor, Louis Elman. Production sound, Peter Sutton. Re-recording, Bill Rowe. Sound track performed by The London Symphony Orchestra; Conducted by Marcus Dods; Solists, Maurice Murphy, Christopher Taylor, Skaila Kanga, Richard Harvey, Morris Pert, Catherine Bott; Orchestration, Trevor Jones, Peter Knight, John Coleman.

CREATURE DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN

Creature and costume design, Brian Froud. Creative supervisor, Sherry Amott. Design and fabrication supervisors: Gelflings, Wendy Midener; Skeksis, Lyle Conway, Sarah Bradpiece; urRu Mystics, Sherry Amott, Tim Clarke; Garthim, Fred Nihda; Aughra and urSkeks, Lyle Conway; Landstriders, Valerie Charlton; Podlings and slaves, Sherry Amott; Environmental creatures, Tim Miller, John Coppinger; Fizgig, Rollin Krewson. Associate costume designers: Skeksis, Sarah Bradpiece, Steven Gregory; urRu Mystics, Shirley Denny, Diana Mosley; Gelflings and podlings, Polly Smith, Barbara Davis, Ellis Duncan. Costumers, Val Jones, Lesja Liber. Wardrobe supervisor, Betty Adamson. Wig and hair, Stuart Artingstall. Special mechanical design, Leigh Donaldson, Tad Krzanowski, John Stephenson, Bob Baldwin. Foam latex supervisor, Tom McLaughlin. Radio control design, Faz Fazakas.

CHARACTER PERFORMERS

Jen	..... Jim Henson
Kira	..... Kathryn Mullen
Aughra	..... Frank Oz
Fizgig	..... Dave Goelz
Chamberlain	..... Frank Oz
General	..... Dave Goelz
High Priest	..... Jim Henson
Scientist	..... Steve Whitmire
Gourmand	..... Louise Gold
Ornamentalist	..... Brian Muehl
Scroll-Keeper	..... Bob Payne
Slave-Master	..... Mike Quinn
Treasurer	..... Tim Rose
UrZah and Dying Master	..... Brian Muehl
Weaver	..... Jean-Pierre Amiel
Cook	..... Hugh Spight
Numerologist	..... Robby Barnett
Hunter	..... Sweet Lim
Chanter	..... Simon Williamson
Scribe	..... Hus Levant
Alchemist	..... Toby Philpott
Healer	..... Dave Greenaway, Richard Slaughter
Landstriders	..... Hugh Spight, Sweet Lim, Robbie Barnett

ADDITIONAL PERFORMERS

Kiran Shah, Mike Edmonds, Peter Burroughs, Malcolm Dixon, Sadie Corre, Deep Roy, Jack Purvis, Gerald Stadden, Mike Cottrell, John Ghaven, Abbie Jones, Natasha Knight, Lisa Esson.

CHARACTER VOICES

Lisa Maxwell, David Buck, Stephen Garlick, Charles Collingwood, Billie Whitelaw, Sean Barrett, Percy Edwards, Brian Muehl, Barry Dennen, Miki Iveria, Jerry Nelson, Patrick Monckton, Steve Whitmire, Sue Westerby, Thick Wilson, Joseph O'Connor, John Baddeley.

still had problems to be sure, but none that could be corrected by further tinkering in postproduction. The problems, which existed in the original version as well, were the film's central characters—the Gelflings—which were difficult for an audience to relate to, and a weak story.

Ironically, the Gelflings were designed to be human-like so that audiences would find them easy to relate to, a concept that backfired because the human qualities of the puppets made them the least interesting and believable characters in the entire film. The obvious solution would have been to use actors or children in the Gelfling roles, an idea Henson considered but rejected out of his commitment to the puppet medium. "What we did was more of a pure form," said Henson. "It certainly is riskier. But I think for what we were trying to do it's much more honest."

With the film now in marketable form, the final hurdle for Henson proved to be financier ACC's insistence that THE DARK CRYSTAL be released almost immediately, even though distributor Universal would be unable to give it the major launch it deserved. Henson came up with \$2 million to defray the interest cost on ACC's investment that would result from further postponements, and began negotiating to buy the film while making final preparations for its release December 17. "I've always felt Christmas was perfect," said Henson of the revised release date. "The film always had a rich Christmas feel to me."



Marketing the film was a major problem. Henson and Kurtz wanted to promote THE DARK CRYSTAL as a fantasy adventure, avoiding as much as possible references to the film's Muppet ancestry, the unique tech-



THE URSKEKS are tall ethereal beings which appear at the film's climax when the urRu and Skeksis merge into one being. Lyle Conway designed the puppets by sculpting a small 12" maquette (left). The maquette was enlarged photographically to the desired size and the finished puppet (right) was sculpted by David Barclay (head) and Jeremy Hunt (arms). Only the eyes were mechanized.

nology involved in its creation or even the fact that it was a puppet film.

"The whole idea of a puppet movie has such a negative connotation," said Henson. "The art of this film lies in puppetry of course, but you could never, ever say that." Added Kurtz, "We hope that once people start watching the film, they will accept the creatures as real within the fantasy context and forget all about the technique. The film will not work if you are constantly thinking, 'How did they do that?'"

That kind of promotion is apparently paying off. THE DARK CRYSTAL did extremely well in its holiday openings in December, confounding many trade observers who expected the film to be a sure loser after its cancelled summer release and rumored postproduction problems. As of February 13, after 59 days in release, the film had collected a boxoffice gross of over \$40 million in the United States and Canada alone.

Another Christmas present for Henson was ACC's decision to sell out shortly before the film's December 17th premiere. Though

details of the sale were not forthcoming it is rumored Henson acquired the film for a total of \$18 million, including the \$2 million already advanced to ACC to cover the film's interest charges.

On the strength of its domestic openings alone, THE DARK CRYSTAL has nearly reached its \$54 million breakeven point. With worldwide rentals, television and ancillary markets yet to be figured in, the film is sure to be a substantial money maker for Henson, if not a solid hit. If the film shows reissue value as a perennial favorite, the deal could be a sweet one for Henson indeed.

"Whenever you do something out of the ordinary, something that is unusual, you run the risk of not being accepted," said Kurtz. "That is one of the risks of this business. If

The Skeksis Garthim Master (Dave Goelz) gives some friendly advice to co-producer Gary Kurtz during filming.



you are continually worried about audience reaction you aren't going to get anywhere. No one wanted to make STAR WARS because science fiction supposedly wasn't popular. You can't use the past as a guide. You have to make something unique to get people interested."

"No one really got involved with THE DARK CRYSTAL for the sole reason of pleasing an audience," said Brian Froud. "We all just wanted to make it. I wanted it to be an artistic success, and from my point of view it is. It is a real stride forward, although it possibly won't be recognized as one until a few years later. The images are so dense that the film demands care and attention while watching. Some effort on the part of the audience has to be made. When I look at the film I do just that: I look at it. It is always fresh and new to me, and I always get swept away by it."

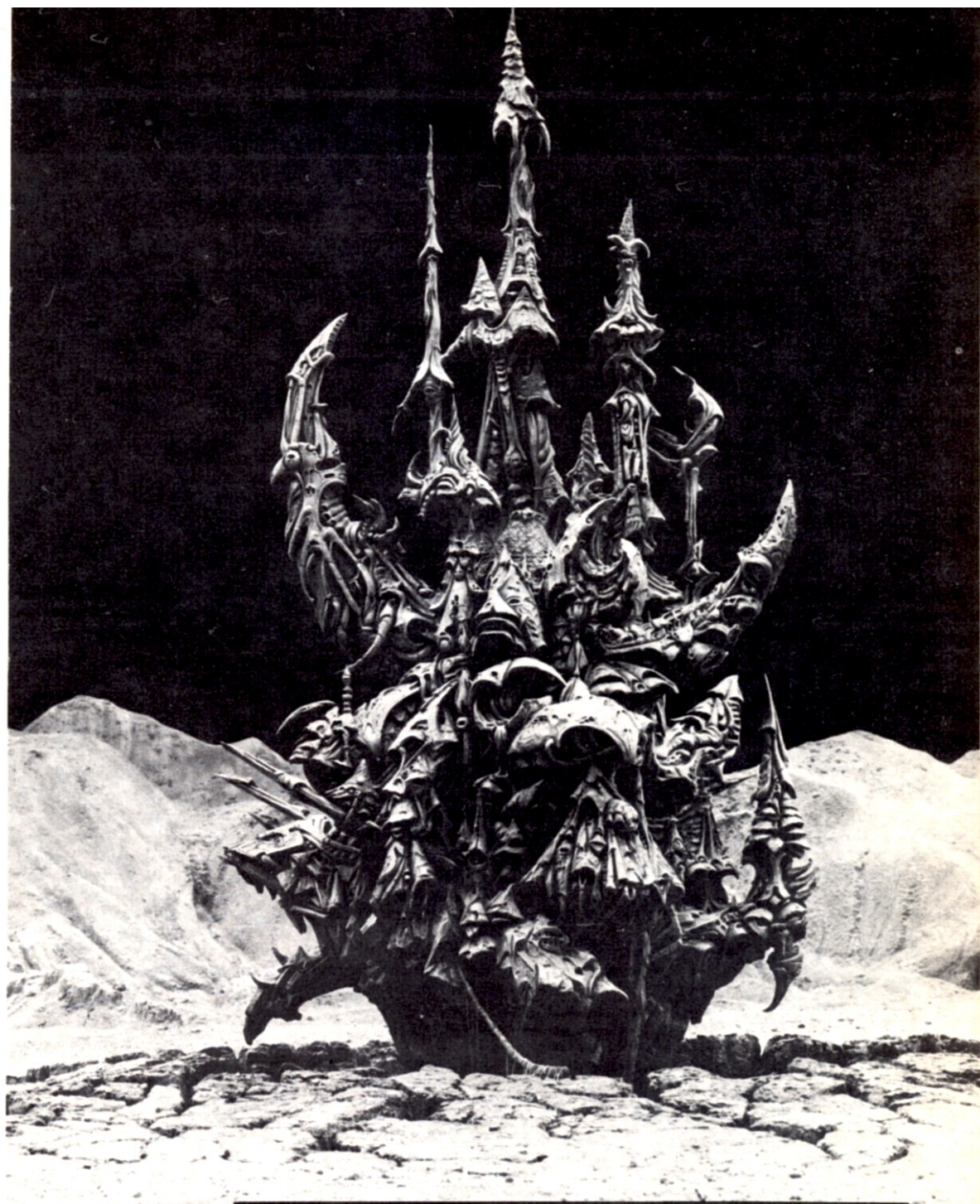
"This is possibly the first time a major live action film has been done without people," said sculptor Lyle Conway. "We are really creating the actors. I don't like to think of it as creating a special effect as much as creating a creature with a personality—a soul. The sculpture has to have this magic even before the puppeteer takes it and gives it life. I'm investing heavily in latex futures just in case films without people catch on. After all, there are no star tantrums, no plush dressing rooms or limos, just the odd suitcase. What more can you ask?"

Latex futures are probably where Henson has his money, too. "THE DARK CRYSTAL is the most rewarding project I've ever been involved with," he said. "I'm more proud of it than anything I've ever done." It's likely we'll be seeing more of Henson's innovation, further expanding the fantastic dramatic possibilities of the puppet medium. Brian Froud and much of the film's creative team is standing by, eager to work together again on a new challenge.

"I don't see a DARK CRYSTAL II," said Henson, to tumultuous applause from an admiring audience at the World Science Fiction Convention. But the puppet master clearly left open the possibility that a follow-up film might feature another story set in the same fantasy land, perhaps a better story this time now that hindsight shows that characters and setting alone aren't enough to support such a fantasy vehicle.

All the props, costumes, puppets and scenery from THE DARK CRYSTAL are carefully stored away in a massive warehouse in Borehamwood, England, nearby the EMI Elstree studios. Henson didn't have the heart to destroy them or throw them out.

"I just couldn't do that because I love them so," said Henson. "Everything is there for us to start up again." □



SKEKSIS CASTLE was built as a four foot miniature by effects supervisor Brian Smithies and set in a surrounding landscape that occupied the greater part of an entire soundstage. The set was draped in black for the addition of sky vistas optically in postproduction. Fissures at the base of the castle were rigged with quartz lights attached to a wiper board to simulate the energy being sucked in by the power of the Dark Crystal. Inset: Peter Voysey sculpts the larger twelve foot model used at the climax when the encrustation of Skeksis rule crumbles away to reveal its gleaming towers.



REVIEWS

Romero, King bring back the gory glory days of E. C. Comics

CREEPSHOW

A United Film Distribution release, 10 82, 129 mins. In Color. Directed by George Romero. Produced by Richard Ruhenstein. Executive producer, Salah Hassanein. Written by Stephen King. Cinematographer, Michael Gornick. Production design, Cletus Anderson. Music, John Harrison. Editors, Pat Buba, Paul Hirsch, Michal Spolan and George Romero. Special makeup effects, Tom Savini.

Henry Northrop Hal Holbrook
Wilma Northrop Adrienne Barbeau
Dexter Stanley Fritz Weaver
Richard Vickers Leslie Nielsen
Upton Pratt E. G. Marshall
Jordy Verrill Stephen King

I was going to stop by the Crypt of Critiques and ask my friend, The Review-Keeper, for his thoughts about CREEPSHOW, the celebrated teaming of director George Romero, author Stephen King and makeup artist Tom Savini. But when old R-K opened his door, adjusted his dribble cup and asked, "Wart's up?" I knew where his head was at, and decided to write the piece myself. I'll do my best.

In a time when a lot of movies are cranked out by cynical hype-mongers, it's a pleasure to greet CREEPSHOW, a lively and good-natured tribute to the spirit of the E. C. horror comics of the 1950s.

Because the E. C. style isn't subtle, you must be prepared to ignore the soreheads who are going to groan about the way Romero and King have translated the look and feel of gruesome comic books to the screen. Sure, comic books are junk. But CREEPSHOW understands that they are *important* junk—important in a primal way that only the child in us understands.

The movie rightfully revels in its own two-dimensionality: colors are primary, characters are archetypal and the logic is simpleminded and irrefutable. Romero has never worked more imaginatively with color and set design, stylizing the mayhem with



E. G. Marshall goes buggy when roaches infest the antique jukebox in his otherwise-stark penthouse, in CREEPSHOW's final—and finest—segment.

clever framing and inventive wipes. With splash panels dissolving into live-action, and animated comic book pages flipping between the segments, the film has all the impact and immediacy of its four-color inspiration, and in this respect, succeeds where other comic-inspired films—like SWAMP THING—have failed.

King fares less well than Romero. The five-story format is fun, but limiting. King has a fondness for a pulpy approach to horror, but his usual knack for dialect and sardonic humor seems a bit halfhearted at times. His performance as a brain-damaged country bumpkin in "The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill," however, is a scream. Jordy, with his bulging eyes and perpetually dejected demeanor, is trapped in a world of TV wrestling, cheap liquor and junked cars. When a meteor lands in his yard, he dreams of big bucks, but ends up developing a unique form of "green thumb."

"Father's Day," though amusing in its depiction of prissy, hedonistic dilettantes who love spending the

money of a murdered relative, is strictly a one-joke idea. Tom Savini comes up with some startling shock effects—notably a delightfully rotted corpse that rises from its grave in the finest E. C. tradition—but the segment lacks the wit and savage irony that typified the best of the pulps.

"Something to Tide You Over" comes closer. Leslie Nielsen is splendid as a cuckold whose idea of a wet dream goes all wrong. He's horrid because he's so *reasonable*. He even pitches in to aid one of his victims and yells, "Help! Help!" Anything to oblige. A pair of waterlogged, walking corpses designed for the segment's climax are nifty, but the story's final moments fall a little flat.

In "The Crate," a college janitor discovers an old box that contains a very hungry... thing, and professor Hal Holbrook sees a golden opportunity to take his shrewish wife (Adrienne Barbeau) to, uh, dinner. "The Crate" is the longest vignette, and benefits from sharp pacing and solid structure. King's script is flip

and funny, a demented parody of WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOLF? Savini's monster is well-designed and appropriately nasty, and Barbeau is good as the bitchiest *hors d'oeuvre* in movie history.

The final segment, "They're Creeping Up on You," may be the best; it's certainly the most focused. E. G. Marshall is grandly venomous as the heartless, anal-retentive businessman whose obsession with cleanliness gets the better of him when he's bugged by a few unwelcome guests. Marshall's penthouse, the work of designer Cletus Anderson, is a horror of gray and white, with high-tech machinery and harsh right angles everywhere. But against one blank wall, cleverly, sits a classic Wurlitzer jukebox—a nice, inventive touch. Like "The Crate," this segment has a satisfying payoff, although close-ups of the dummy that doubles for Marshall are not terribly convincing.

If anthology horror films have stumbled in the past, it's been because their framing stories have been lame and pointless. CREEPSHOW cleverly establishes that its five tales are stories in a "Creepshow" comic book that is being read by a little boy. I suppose a lot of former kids will be able to sympathize when the boy (Joe King, Stephen's son) is harassed by his comics-hating father. But don't worry: Junior's revenge is sweet.

Despite the weaknesses of the script, King and Romero are congenial, even *logical*, collaborators. Both men understand that the best scares are the simple ones, and that it's all right to be unabashedly childlike once in awhile. The audience I was with laughed and screamed heartily and probably went home happy. I know I did. My dribble cup runneth over.

David J. Hogan

Equal doses of blood and crud make this flick a barbaric mess

SORCERESS

A New World Pictures release, 10 82, 75 mins. In color. Directed by Brian Stuart. Written by Jim Wynoski. Produced by Jack Hill.

Mara Lynette Harris
Mira Leigh Harris
Traigon Robert Ballesteros
Krona Martin La Salle

If you have trouble getting sword and sorcery adventures out of your system, this film might make a good laxative. SORCERESS exploits the two most unappetizing ingredients of adolescent fantasy: sex without sensitivity, and violence without sensibility.

The mayhem takes place in one of

those mystical realms where barbarism and black magic go hand-in-claw. An evil wizard named Traigon (Ballesteros) hopes to gain great powers by sacrificing the oldest of his twin daughters. He encounters strong resistance from Mrs. Traigon, and they kill each other in a grisly custody battle.

The children manage to escape with Krona (Martin La Salle), a friendly warrior. Under his guidance, Mara and Mira (Lynette and Leigh Harris) disguise themselves as boys—a ruse made ridiculous by their tendency to jiggle—and grow up to become great fighters and lousy

actresses, delivering their lines with the dull monotone of an airport page.

After Traigon returns to life, he searches for his daughters, eventually killing their foster family. The twins seek their revenge, armed with a magic word given to them by Krona, and accompanied by a witless soldier (Bruno Rey), a jerky prince (Bob Nelson) and a horny character wearing half of a gorilla suit. As the story tumbles along, it's obvious that none of them will live to see the end of the picture unless Mara or Mira can remember Krona's buzz word.

When they do, the movie pulls out all stops, including a bat-winged lion

who spits lightning, a snaky demoness whose head explodes, and an army of the undead who battle the unactresses and unactors. There's even a gang of shepherds who attack Traigon's stronghold. It's the sort of spectacle you're not likely to see elsewhere—thankfully.

SORCERESS represents a rare feat of sorcery: using a cast and crew filled with American names, it has the feel of a cheap Italian flick. Previous New World efforts tempered their exploitative nature with some artistic flair, but SORCERESS doesn't give the audience one good reason to sit through it all.

Christopher Martin



One of Conal Cochran's employees models a deadly Halloween mask.

Hack rewrite turns Kneale's treat into dreary chaos. Some trick.

HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH

A Universal release, 10/82, 96 mins. In color. Directed and written by Tommy Lee Wallace. Produced by John Carpenter and Debra Hill. Executive producers, Irwin Yablans, Joseph Wolf. Director of photography, Dean Cundey. Editor, Millie Moore. Production design, Peter Jamison. Special makeup effects, Tom Burman. Music, John Carpenter and Alan Howarth.

Dr. Daniel Challis Tom Atkins
Ellie Grimbridge Stacey Nelkin
Conal Cochran Dan O'Herlihy

Buried somewhere in HALLOWEEN III: THE SEASON OF THE WITCH are both the mauled remains of Nigel Kneale's original screenplay and of John Carpenter's good intentions. Kneale can probably survive the mutilation of what must have been a nice bit of work. Whether John Carpenter can continue to survive with his "boy wonder" reputation intact is another question, for it is becoming appallingly clear that Carpenter simply doesn't know what makes a story work on the screen.

Carpenter's recent films—including THE FOG, ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK and THE THING—had terrific ideas that floundered because of plot problems and slim character development. Carpenter's non-directorial efforts—including HALLOWEEN II—share many of the same problems. Although HALLOWEEN III started from good intentions, it's still a hopelessly jumbled mess, and about as scary as a tepid can of generic light beer.

Carpenter's heart, at least, appears to have been in the right place when it came to this second sequel to his fabulously successful HALLOWEEN. With The Shape finally dead, and Jamie Lee Curtis tired of screaming, Carpenter attempted to segue the series into an anthology format where a different storyline could be

continued on page 60

Standard creature feature is uplifted by its top-flight cast

Q A United Film Distribution Co. Release, 9/82, 92 mins. In color. Directed, written and produced by Larry Cohen. Executive producers, Don Sandburg and Richard DiBona. Special visual effects, David Allen, Randy Cook and Peter Kuran. Cinematographer, Fred Murphey. Music, Robert Ragland. Editor, Armand Lebowitz. Special makeup, Dennis Eger. Additional modelmakers, Roger Dicken, Dennis Gordon, Aiko, Dee Rossier.

Jimmy Quinn Michael Moriarty
Det. Shepard David Carradine
Joan Candy Clark
Sgt. Powell Richard Roundtree

Larry Cohen may be the last of the low-rent scuz kings, but at least he's original and sometimes engaging—even if it sometimes seems more accidental than purposeful. His latest film, *Q*, starts out as a bad version of *JAWS* on the wing. But it turns into a nice, offbeat, black comedy that features the most aggressively-seedy performance by an actor since Eli Wallach chewed up half of Spain in *THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY*.

Michael Moriarty plays an ex-junkie turned getaway driver, whose latest holdup job is botched and has him fleeing both his ex-partners and the police. He limps his way to the top of the Chrysler building where he finds the unlikely answer to all his dreams: the very alive and hungry incarnation of the ancient Aztec serpent god, Quetzacoatl.

The big *Q*, it seems, has been brought back to life by an unrepentant Mexican priest, who is leaving a trail of skinned sacrifices for detective David Carradine to pick up. To Carradine, the monster is just another pain-in-the-ass part of life in New York. Moriarty, on the other hand, knows a good thing when he sees it, and sets out to sell to the city the location of the creature for a cool million (tax free, no less), exclusive film and book rights, as well as amnesty for all his crimes.

In *Q*, Cohen is working with some decent actors for a change and the difference is apparent. David Carra-

dine turns in another low-keyed, but sly, performance as a detective who knows you can do your job and still come out on the wrong end of things. The real surprise, though, is Moriarty, who always seems like something of a cold fish when he tries doing "dignified" roles.

Moriarty cuts loose and steals the show from everyone—including the monster. His character is a whiny chiseler, walking in a perpetual cringe from the trouble he knows is just around the corner. But he comes nervously alive when he discovers the monster's hiding place and knows that he's finally got a winning hand.

Candy Clark has a few good bits as Moriarty's girlfriend, but aside from the cast, there's little to recommend about the film. For example, it's hard to believe—as Cohen would like us to—that the monster has gotten away with its daylight attacks for so long, "because it's flying out of the sun and nobody can see it."

Dave Allen's design for the monster is nice, but the animation lacks pizzazz: it doesn't have any of the tiny characteristics that, say, Ray Harryhausen might have included to give the creature a sense of power and deadly grace. Only in the final scenes, as the dying monster feebly clings to the top of a pyramid-like skyscraper to keep from falling, does the film capture any sense of the creature's liveliness.

It's a pity, too, for with some better effects and tighter scriptwriting, *Q* might have been able to catch the public's attention as an offbeat comedy-horror film, along the lines of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* or even *EATING RAOUL*.

The film is ultimately a disappointment, but it's still a lot more watchable than some of the more bombastic megabuck epics being touted to the public. *Q* is a true "B" flick in the nicest sense of the word.

Michael Mayo

Dave Allen films the winged serpent on a shoestring budget

When *Q* began filming, writer/director Larry Cohen actually had no *Q*, the giant bird that menaces New York. That's because Cohen threw a low-budget monster movie together almost overnight, after being fired from *I, THE JURY* (eventually helmed by Richard T. Heffron).

"Larry Cohen told me he literally had no time to consult with technical people," said David Allen, supervisor—along with Randy Cook—of the stop-motion animation effects which brought the winged serpent to life. "I would have preferred a prior involvement. But that wasn't in the cards. It was very impromptu," Allen added. "The only storyboards we worked from were some thumbnail sketches that Randy made."

Cohen went back to New York and shot a few additional bits of footage, but Allen was essentially handed a completed movie into which he had to fit the animation. "We did 40 or 50 shots in the film," said Allen, who worked on the film about five months. "But I think it really needed to have at least as many more."

After producer Sam Arkoff viewed the rough cut, Cook and Allen were called back to punch up the film's climax. "He wanted to see the bird actually attacking someone," Allen said. "Having the bird just fly around the building, being shot by machine guns till it fell, was pretty tame."

The added shots involved an attack on a cop perched on the outside of the Chrysler Building. Since no background footage existed, Allen, Cook and modelmaker Dennis Gordon were forced to piece the sequence together almost entirely with miniatures.

The lack of preproduction on *Q* forced Allen to use whatever resources were available. "One shot arose because we happened to find an interesting down-angle shot," Allen said. "It was just a piece of scrap film that I cleaned it up with film cleaner."

"You'd laugh if you knew how little we had to work with," Allen added. "But we did the best we could under rather unusual circumstances." Kay Anderson

Quetzacoatl, a mythological flying serpent, swoops around New York's Chrysler Building in one of about 50 animated cuts provided by David Allen and Randy Cook. Because the film was virtually completed before director Larry Cohen contacted Allen and Cook, little provision could be made to facilitate the effects, forcing the animators to scrounge for suitable background footage. Allen agrees with critics who felt the animation was somewhat lacking. "There just weren't enough shots of the creature," he said.



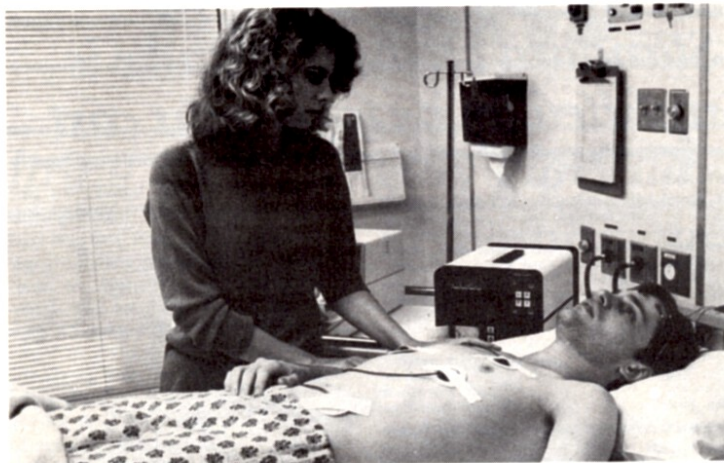
A thoughtful, intelligent debut—despite the confusing denouement

THE SENDER

A Paramount release, 10:52, 91 mins. Directed by Roger Christian. Produced by Edward S. Feldman. Screenplay, Thomas Baum. Cinematographer, Roger Pratt. Editor, Alan Strachan. Music, Trevor Jones. Sound, Tony Dawe. Special effects, Nick Allder. Assistant director, Roger Simons. Art direction, Steve Spence, Charles Bishop. Stunt coordinator, Colin Skeaping.

Gail Farmer..... Kathryn Harrold
The Sender..... Zeljko Ivanek
Jerilyn..... Shirley Knight
Dr. Denman..... Paul Freeman
The Messiah..... Sean Hewitt

THE SENDER is an odd little entry in today's low-budget horror field—a class act with impeccable directing and acting that clearly means to get as far away as possible from the ever-continuing crop of mad slasher clones of HALLOWEEN and FRIDAY THE 13TH. However, the film never gets a grasp on whether it wants to be a cerebral spook film of a CARRIE-esque horror film, and it vacillates between the



Dr. Gail Farmer (Kathryn Harrold) examines *The Sender* (Zeljko Ivanek) following a bizarre suicide attempt, in Roger Christian's promising directorial debut.

two before fizzling out in one of the most incomprehensible endings of 1982.

As a showcase for first-time director Roger Christian's talents, THE SENDER certainly encourages you to see more of his work. As a story, though, the film keeps promising thrills and chills that never materialize. It's difficult to understand how so much good talent could possibly not realize that the ending doesn't work.

The "Sender" is a nameless young man (Zeljko Ivanek) who is sent to a state mental hospital after a public

attempt at drowning himself. Tagged as "John Doe 83," Ivanek comes under the care of Kathryn Harrold (Albert Brook's heartthrob from MODERN ROMANCE), who is intrigued by the young man's amnesia but is unaware that it masks paranormal powers.

Harrold experiences several "walking nightmares" before discovering Ivanek is a telepathic, "broadcasting" his pain and torment to anyone who can receive him. Paul Freeman, the head of the hospital, is overjoyed at this discovery; he wants to surgi-

cally probe Ivanek's brain and pinpoint which areas of the brain are involved with telepathy. But Ivanek's equally mysterious mother (Shirley Knight) shows up and warns Harrold that everyone in the hospital—Harrold most of all—is in terrible danger unless they release her child. Ivanek, however, has no desire to go with his mother, since their relationship conceals the terrible key to his suicide attempt.

It's obvious THE SENDER is one of those films made with love and care, but in this case good intentions are not enough to overcome the storyline's flaws. Screenwriter Thomas Baum seems to have forgotten that being oblique is not necessarily the same thing as generating suspense. The story never reveals crucial information that would allow the audience to comprehend what is happening. The Shirley Knight character, for example, has been dead since the start of the film. But that fact isn't revealed until the film is nearly over. Is she a ghost or a projection of Ivanek's tortured mind? The film never makes it clear.

The film also barely sketches the mutually agonizing life of Ivanek and Knight, who had lived in a solitary cabin far removed from humanity. We're never really sure what caused Knight's death—either murder or suicide—although Knight's performance alludes to a hidden layer

continued on page 60

Few pictures have had as little class—or wit—as this "Class"

NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CLASS REUNION

A 20th Century-Fox release, 10:52, 84 mins. In color. Directed by Michael Miller. Screenplay, John Hughes. Director of photography, Phil Lathrop. Editors, Richard C. Meyer, Ann Mills. Produced by Matty Simmons. Coproducers, Harmon Berms, Peter V. Herald. Music, Peter Bernstein, Mark Goldenberg. Production design, Dean Edward Mitzner. Makeup, Del Armstrong.

Bob Spinnaker..... Gerrit Graham
Dr. Young..... Michael Lerner
Gary Nash..... Fred McCarren
Bunny Packard..... Miriam Flynn
Hubert Downs..... Stephen Furst
Iris Augen..... Marva Small
Meredith Modess..... Shelley Smith
Delores Salk..... Zane Buzby
Jane Washburn..... Jacklyn Zeman
Walter Baylor..... Blackie Dammett
Egon Von Stoker..... Jim Staahl

The magazine that brought you the super-hero "Fartman," and a pictorial essay on how to burp a baby with a rolling pin, has done it again: NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CLASS REUNION is dumb, sophomoric, crude, irreverent—and about as funny as a gas-packed episode of "Fartman."

The screenplay, by *Lampoon* contributing editor John Hughes, reads like a limp *Mad* magazine movie satire. CLASS REUNION is nearly a complete shambles; never more than mildly amusing, often strained and boring, and staged by director Michael Miller like a club-footed high school revue.

Taking a 15-minute SATURDAY

NIGHT LIVE sketch and padding it out to feature length was the first of this vehicle's many mistakes. Hughes has added a few genre elements to the usual barrage of low-brow jokes (a psychopath on the loose, a cripple who sells her soul to the Devil in exchange for a cure) in a weak attempt to poke fun at recent stalk-and-slash films. But it doesn't help, and most of the film just lies there begging for laughs.

The story opens in 1972 at a dope and beer fest put on by the graduating members of Lizzie Borden High School. Class wimp Walter Baylor (Blackie Dammett) is tricked into having sex with a "shy" girl who wears a paper bag over her head—only to discover afterwards that the girl is his dog-faced twin sister. The shock of the ordeal sends poor Walter scurrying for a padded cell.

Ten years later the class gathers for a reunion, unaware that Walter has escaped from the cracker factory with revenge on his warped mind. In attendance are the usual assortment of stereotypes; Hughes' one-dimensional characters suggest that he has been too-long entrenched in the *Lampoon* philosophy of ridicule over comedic shading.

That said, the film does have a few moments of levity: the blind woman's seering eye dog wolfing down the food from her plate as she goes

through the buffet line; the killer's collection of paper bags with a different face drawn on each; and a slovenly cook (a nice comic turn by Ann Ramsey) who has to cut her homemade lasagna with a chainsaw.

The cast does as well as possible, considering the limitations of the material. Zane Buzby has fun with her role as the possessed feminist, spewing flames to light a cigarette and speaking like a pack-a-day Mercedes McCambridge, and Jim Staahl—playing a Transylvanian "exchange" student—does hilarious things with his rubbery face.

On a technical level, there are a few okay matte shots of the school perched atop a hill like Dracula's castle, makeup artist Del Armstrong's fire-breathing mock-up of Zane Buzby works well, and Dean Mitzner's production design has just the right grimy, cluttered look for a school that has been closed for 10 years.

Satire is perhaps the most difficult form of comedy to do, as it requires a skillful blending of wit, ridicule, sarcasm and irony to make it work. AIRPLANE! is the only spoof

of late I can think of to successfully combine those elements. Among the unsuccessful: SATURDAY THE 14TH, STUDENT BODIES and now NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CLASS REUNION. But then AIRPLANE! didn't have those films' low standards.

Kyle Counts



Class wimp Walter Baylor (Blackie Dammett) terrorizes his high school's 10-year reunion. Why does he wear a paper bag? Walter has a few problems. But then, so does CLASS REUNION.

Henson gave life to a world, but gave its inhabitants no life

THE DARK CRYSTAL

A Universal release. 12/82. 95 mins. In color, scope, 70mm and Dolby Stereo. Directed by Jim Henson and Frank Oz. Written by David Odell. Produced by Henson and Gary Kurtz. Music by Trevor Jones.

Featuring the voices of:

Jen..... Stephen Garlick
 Kira..... Lisa Maxwell
 Aughra..... Billie Whitelaw

[For complete cast & credits see page 54]

For the love of puppetry, *THE DARK CRYSTAL* succeeds, and for the love of puppetry *THE DARK CRYSTAL* fails.

For that is what Jim Henson does, he "wiggles dolls." And with *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, he set out to make an original feature-length film by combining a myriad of state-of-the-art effects with his own unique form of video puppetry.

What he has achieved, with the aid of Frank Oz and a small army of artists and technicians, should not be underrated. For though *THE DARK CRYSTAL* premiered without the hoopla accorded the first feature-length animated film, *SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS* (1937), Henson's film also stands at the doorway of a whole new kind of cinematic experience. Disney was the pioneer when it came to the possibilities of drama without actors, but Henson has created the means for, and proved that audiences will believe in and follow, the dramatic adventures of three-dimensional animated characters.

Henson utilizes a classic good vs. evil storyline, similar to Disney's fairy tale approach, but aesthetically *THE DARK CRYSTAL* breaks new ground. The film's artists, led by conceptual designer Brian Froud, have imagined a stunningly beautiful world; equally talented artists realized these characters and environments into living, breathing capsules of wonder, all dripping with detail. Every scene is a visual delight, be it the naked form of a flute-playing Gelfling amid lush greenery, or the rotting bedridden body of an evil Skeksis.

Though form puts more severe limitations upon puppetry than upon cel animation, Henson and crew still manage to achieve realistic, yet characterized, motion. By augmenting the puppets mechanics and full-figure costumes, they have given each race an individualized form of movement, from the sharp spinning and jabbing of the Skeksis to the gliding and shuffling of the Mystics. The menagerie of air, land and water creatures in the background bring with them an added assortment of unique locomotive patterns and strange sounds, as does the very landscape itself.

Unfortunately, the script does not move along nearly as well as does the population. Unlike Disney, the

Muppet creators became too enraptured in their art, and forgot that they had to tell a story.

In *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, nothing makes sense. And magic *must* make sense. In Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, Frodo must destroy the magic ring because Sauron, having put much of his power into it upon creation, would become invincible upon its recovery; "logic" dictates the use of fires which forged the ring. *THE DARK CRYSTAL* offers no such logic. But it does offer a host of puzzling questions:

Why does the Crystal have to be repaired? How is it connected with the planet's three suns? And how will the replacement of Jen's crystal shard end Skeksis rule?

The film's climax answers some of these questions, but raises still more. But even if it had explained all, it would have been too late. Viewers spend much of *THE DARK CRYSTAL* wondering what the hero will accomplish with his shard, and the fogginess of this goal plays hell with audience understanding and identification.

One might expect an opening narration to explain some of these laws of nature and magic, but the film begins with a bit of surprisingly unpoetic ramblings and simple descriptions of easily-understood visuals. Most of the film's dialogue is equally useless and trite. There are some good lines, but they're all but lost.

The problem: choice dialogue rises out of, and is inextricably linked to, personality and situation—two dull facets of *THE DARK CRYSTAL*. Henson and his fellow puppeteers have managed to bring their handi-crafts to life as living beings, but not as characters. Only the secret-keeping Aughra and the Skeksis Chamberlain seem to have been conceived with any personality, but Aughra comes off as little more than a foul-mouthed loud-mouth, the Chamberlain as a creature of obtuse motivation with a penchant for melodic humming.

The film is also hurt by the certainty of where it is headed. Even though the viewer may not know exactly what replacing the crystal shard will do, he does know that Jen will replace it. This prophecy—told in the opening narration and repeated throughout—makes the outcome (forgive me) crystal clear. Yes, we know that a fantasy like this will probably have a happy ending, but the prophecy—which *all* the characters believe as gospel truth—wipes out the last bit of suspense. Worse, it makes Jen and Kira appear as pawns in some pre-planned history: a hero must affect events, not just be affected by them.

Once the Mystics and the prophecy



Jen and Kira float to safety, a nifty bit of puppeteering and one of the film's truly memorable moments: "Wings? I don't have wings!" Jen says, puzzled, as they reach the bottom of the cliff. "Of course not," Kira answers demurely. "You're a boy."

send Jen forth, it's the Garthim—roach-like warriors—who push the action ahead, chasing Jen out of Aughra's observatory, out of the Podling's cavern, into the castle, into the fire shaft, and even out onto the Crystal! Odysseus wallowed in freedom next to this guy.

In fact, *THE DARK CRYSTAL* is a classic example of mythology misused: the film reproduces surface detail from stories that are centuries old, but not the underlying reasoning behind them. *The Lord of the Rings* also involves unusual lifeforms which die out in the end, but they die to leave the Earth for humankind. Henson and scriptwriter David Odell use the same formula, but identify the setting as "another world, another time." While this, by itself, would not be a major indictment, it points to more serious lapses.

From *STAR WARS* to *E.T.* to *CONAN*, rebirths seem to be in vogue: you know, "we don't want to upset the audience by having a good guy really die, but a death scene sure would hook the audience..." All of these films cheat themselves and their audiences by refusing to face the reality of death. In *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, Kira dies to retrieve the crystal shard, only to be brought back to life moments later. A mythological rebirth—be it Christ or Gandalf the White—involves the moral fiber of the individual and the intervention of a diety shown to be on the side of "right."

But resurrection is treated pretty callously here. For though she sacrifices herself to end Skeksis rule, Kira was merely doing what she was told to, rather than expressing a strong will determined to defeat evil. More importantly, Kira has generated so little interest as a personality that it is difficult to care if she lives, or dies, or lives. Her resurrection is not a hero's reward, but simply one of many

strands used to sew the film up into a happy ending.

For Kira does live. Jen lives. Aughra lives. Even the silly little fuzball, Fizzgig, lives! Victory without sacrifice cheapens the struggle, and does not fit the mythological pattern; from the trials of Odysseus to Frodo's loss of home and tainting of soul, victory extracts a toll. *THE DARK CRYSTAL* ends as if a battle did not even occur; everything ends nicely, for the good guys and the bad guys.

There are other problems with the story—including a lack of thematic unity which could have pulled the whole thing together—but the point is already made.

So why did the man who gave us *SESAME STREET* and *THE MUPPET SHOW* fail? Because puppeteering is a means, *not* an end. Puppets may have more inherent heart than, say, spaceship models, but they are still simply a cinematic technique. Unlike Henson's early projects—which could get by with witty dialogue and cute personalities—feature films demand more in the way of story and character. It is not enough that his features succeed as *puppet* films, they must prove themselves as *films* first, and the simplistic values of good and evil which have worked on the small screen simply can not hold up an entire feature.

Yes, vitality pours out of Trevor Jones' soundtrack, scenes such as the Gelflings atop galloping Landstriders and the Skeksis mawling their dinner linger delectably in the mind, and the visuals please, astound, touch and delight. But it is not enough.

Perhaps someday Henson and his artisans will return to the World of the Dark Crystal and have a story to tell. Maybe an entirely new fantasy universe. But as for now, I guess I'll have to be content with watching *FRAGGLE ROCK* each week on HBO

Allen Malmquist

HALLOWEEN III

continued from page 57

done each fall, instead of replays of the old slasher theme.

The project was helped along by the fortuitous availability of Nigel Kneale. With the *QUARTERMASS* series to his credit, Kneale has been one of England's foremost talents in the field. His non-genre work has been no less outstanding, with the adaptations of *LOOK BACK IN ANGER* and *THE ENTERTAINER* leading the list.

It's hard to believe, then, that Carpenter would let first-time director Tommy Lee Wallace "rewrite" Kneale's screenplay, as was widely reported. A fine writer like Kneale carefully weaves a script both with character and idea development—his excellent screenplay for *FIVE MILLION YEARS FROM EARTH*, for example. Only an equally talented writer would be able to understand and retain what the original writer was trying to do. In the hands of anything less, the rough thrust of the storyline might be retained, but much of the supporting material is likely to be lost or replaced with inferior material. The result is that the whole of the storyline falls to pieces, and that's exactly what happens to *HALLOWEEN III*.

Kneale's original concept for *HALLOWEEN III*—the remaining bare bones of which provide the only interest in the film—is ghoulishly funny and horrible at the same time. Conal Cochran is a world-famous toy maker (he's the one who invented sticky toilet paper, says one character) whose three glow-in-the-dark masks are the rage among kids for the upcoming Halloween. Cochran has blanketed the airwaves with obnoxious commercials plugging his masks and advertising a huge giveaway which will come after the Halloween TV eve broadcast of (what else?) Carpenter's *HALLOWEEN*.

But Cochran's "faith and begorra" Irish smile hides a death's head leer, and a plan to pull one last practical joke on the millions of children who will be wearing his masks. Cochran has stolen one of the Stonehenge



Little Buddy (Bradley Schachter) and his parents (Jadeen Barbor, Ralph Straight) about to discover that watching too many commercials can rot your brains.

slabs, said to be an ancient sacrificial altar, and is embedding tiny fragments of the rock into computer microchips hidden in the masks. Wedding modern technology with witchcraft, Cochran plans to unleash an ancient Celtic curse, drenching America in blood.

According to various sources, Kneale's script was rejected by Carpenter for being either "too passive," not having enough grisly violence and for merely being "too British." Wallace's rewrite "corrects" these faults with a vengeance, with an active hero who fights and fucks his way through an incoherent script punctuated with grisly murders—courtesy of Tom Burman's nicely gruesome makeup.

Wallace's idea of "Americanizing" the script is to have a slightly harassed, divorced doctor (Tommy Atkins) whose hospital is invaded by one of Cochran's clockwork henchmen, a graysuited bunch of crewcut types that look like leftovers from the Nixon administration. One of them comes in, tears a man's skull apart, then sets himself on fire. Atkins, with the lightning brilliance born of sloppy writing, gets the idea that *something is wrong* and charges off with the victim's nubile daughter (Stacy Nelkin) to see what he can

discover in the town where Cochran's mask factory is located.

Anyone over the age of six is way ahead of the characters when they reach the town. The townspeople stare ominously whenever strangers appear, closed-circuit cameras scan the town constantly, and a Cochran-imposed six o'clock curfew is backed up by the Graysuits. Just why Cochran watches over the town like he does, or why he's imposed a curfew, or even why nobody has ever hopped in his car and made for an adjoining town's sheriff is apparently some of the information that Wallace either forgot to include or decided the audience was too stupid to think about. Instead, Wallace shows where his and Carpenter's hearts are at by throwing in two pointless murders and a repulsively stupid sex scene between Atkins and Nelkin.

Wallace is as bad a director as he is a writer, and not even the slow-in-coming climax does much to salvage the picture. The chintzy budget also cripples the films; the Don Post studios make a dandy double for Cochran's maskworks, but the underground "doomsday" center is as awful and cheap as anything from the worst of Irwin Allen.

With competent actors the film might have been better, but the cast-

ing, with the exception of poor Dan O'Herlihy as Conal Cochran, is as low budget as the rest of the film. O'Herlihy is a good reminder of what a talented actor can do with the thinnest material.

Though his character is mangled by shoddy script, at least O'Herlihy is able to carry his scenes. No such saving grace is evident from the two "heroes," Tom Atkins and Stacy Nelkin. Atkins resembles a slightly-older version of Tom Skeritt, but his acting talents are as skimpy as the script. As leading characters, he and Nelkin leave an awful gap in the film. The actors you want to watch—other than O'Herlihy—are an obnoxious toy retailer and his family, played with broad strokes by Ralph Straight, Jadeen Barbor and Bradley Schachter. It's easy to see that this is the group to which *something* is going to happen, but the three are so vivid that even their performances outshine the cloddish Atkins.

HALLOWEEN III has already gone into the black so it's likely Carpenter's experiment will be deemed successful enough for another shot next year. In a film market where many genre films must practically claw their way into existence, this probably isn't a bad thing. With any luck, next year's installment won't waste such good technical talents as photographer Dean Cundey or Tom Burman's makeup expertise. It bodes ill, though, that Carpenter cannot, or will not, keep from monkeying with material that can stand quite nicely on its own.

Carpenter is a talented director of action and actors, but Stanley Kubrick he's not. When Carpenter makes the decision to let a tyro like Wallace butcher one of the few names in screenwriting respected for both his fantasy and non-fantasy work, then it's time for Carpenter to admit he's a terrible producer and leave that work to someone who knows what makes a good script. *ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13* and *HALLOWEEN* prove Carpenter's creative strengths; shambles like *HALLOWEEN II* and *III* demonstrate weaknesses better left undisplayed. **Michael Mayo**

THE SENDER

continued from page 58

of madness and incest.

Another problem is that Christian perhaps tried *too* hard to stay away from the splatter genre; the result is that the film is drained of some of the emotional heat it might have had if it were a little more shocking. Although the film is bloody in parts, and Ivanek's visions *look* scary, the shocks are strangely unmoving without a solid story in which to put them—much as the elevators gushing blood in *THE SHINING* were much more frightening as a trailer than within the film itself. Though Christian slides wonderfully into Ivanek's telepathic "invasions," he then sputters by not doing anything of impact with them. David Cronenberg, whose films

aren't written very tightly either, would have probably scared the hell out of people with this material.

This is all the more frustrating because the film does achieve some genuine moments of power, and contains some of the most solid acting seen in a "small" movie of late. Kathryn Harrold turns in a nicely understated performance, with rare emphasis on intelligence rather than vulnerability. Paul Freeman compliments Harrold as a man confident of his skills and his belief in Harrold's talents, even though he frequently disagrees with her. Their relationship strikes the right balance of friendship and professionalism and is mercifully free of the nitwit banter that passes for dialogue between men and women in films today.

The only minus to Shirley Knight's performance is that the film makes her yet another religious loony from the South—honeydew accent and all. Knight shows her skills as an actress (all too rarely seen, unfortunately) by rising through the stereotype and giving a soft and warm performance which comes alive despite the limitations of the script.

The only actor who really fares badly is Zeljko Ivanek, who is afflicted by the double whammy of being a relatively young actor paired with a trio of seasoned professionals, and being given a part which has him doing little more than wandering through the film looking pained. Ivanek seems capable of doing more, but never gets a chance to show it.

THE SENDER is the first full-

length effort for Christian, the award-winning art director of *ALIEN* and *STAR WARS*, and it clearly illustrates what he learned from working with top directors George Lucas and Ridley Scott. Individual scenes are carefully composed and staged, combining the visually dense look of Scott's work with the sense of action that Lucas brought to *STAR WARS*.

If *THE SENDER* isn't a very memorable film, it's a good indication that once Christian gets some good material he's going to be a fine director. And if it didn't succeed commercially, it at least attempted to rise above the gratuitous gore and sniggering mentality that dominates the genre. I can't wait to see what Roger Christian sends us next. **Michael Mayo**

FILM RATINGS

ALONE IN THE DARK

Directed by Jack Sholder. New Line Cinema, 11/82, 92 mins. With: Jack Palance, Donald Pleasance, Martin Landau.

Like Universal in the 1940s, the producers must have felt that four monsters (psychos) were better than one. A power blackout unleashes four mental patients who terrorize a psychiatrist and his family. Less blood than usual, but ultimately just another routine effort. **DS**

BLUE THUNDER

With: Roy Scheider, Malcolm McDowell, Warren Oates, Candy Clarke, Daniel Stern.

Yuck, another stupid hardware film. A super-charged helicopter loaded with ultra-modern privacy invasion equipment is the star—and that's the problem. Malcolm McDowell walks through the villain role looking bilious, 'cause in real life he's afraid of heights. Where is Bruce Dern when we really need him? **JPH**

A non-stop barrage of action and pyrotechnics that had me screaming for more. Kudos to stunt director Terry Leonard, and to a special effects crew whose destruction of an L.A. skyscraper is frighteningly real. Strong contender for blockbuster status. **MJK**

BRIMSTONE AND TREACLE

Directed by Richard Loncraine. UA Classics, 11/82, 98 mins. With: Sting, Denholm Elliott, Joan Plowright.

A dark, nasty fantasy from the poison pen of Dennis Potter (PENNIES FROM HEAVEN). Sting, lead singer for The Police, bows impressively as a demonic drifter who invades the homestead of an anguished psalm writer, his walking platitude of a missus and their brain-damaged young daughter. Director Richard Loncraine (THE MISSIONARY) expertly plies the Gothic trappings and Pinter-esque undertones, dodging the minefields of Potter's acid-etched screenplay with high style. **Stephen Rebello**

THE ENTITY

With: Barbara Hershey, Ron Silver

This horror film is about as good as POLTERGEIST; the shame is that for a while it promises to be a lot better. Although the film falters badly in the final minutes, Barbara Hershey is splendid in a difficult role, and Ron Silver gives a star-quality performance. **David J. Hogan**

The heart of THE ENTITY is a vacuum. Because you never see this invisible menace, and because his motives are never fathomed, it's hard to get any satisfaction from the story. The film stands as a treatise on the brutality of rape, but I don't think gore hounds wish to be preached to. **JPH**

THE EVIL DEAD

Directed by Samuel M. Raimi. New Line Cinema, 2/83, 90 mins. With: Bruce Campbell, Ellen Sandweiss, Betsy Baker.

This low budget flick about spirits who come back to life is a lot funnier than PLAN 9 FROM

FILM TITLE	●●●●		●●●		●●		●		○			
	MUST SEE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	MEDIOCRE	WORTHLESS	FSC	KC	JPH	MJK	BK	MM	DS
AIRPLANE II: THE SEQUEL / Ken Finkleman Paramount, 12/82, 86 mins.			●		●●	●	●	●	●●	●●	●●●	
AMITYVILLE II: THE POSSESSION / Damino Damani, Orion Pictures, 9/82, 88 mins.			●	○	●●	●●	○	○	○		○	
THE BEASTMASTER / Don Cascarelli MGM-UA, 7/82, 118 mins.			●	●			○	○	○	●	●●	
BLUE THUNDER / John Badham Columbia, 5/83, 108 mins.	●●●●				●	●●●						●●●
CREEPSHOW / George Romero Warner Bros, 11/82, 122 mins.	●●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	○	○	●●			
THE DARK CRYSTAL / Jim Henson, Frank Oz Universal, 12/82, 94 mins.	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●	●●	●●	○	○	●●	●●	●●	●●
EATING RAOUL / Paul Bartel Quartet Films, 10/82, 87 mins.	●●●			●●●						●●	●●●	
THE ENTITY / Sidney J. Furie 20th Century-Fox, 2/83, 105 mins.	●●●			●	●●●	○						●
FORBIDDEN WORLD / Allan Holtzman New World, 5/82, 86 mins.			●	●	●●	○	○	○	○	●●		○
HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH Tommy Lee Wallace, Universal, 10/82, 98 mins.		●	○	●	○	○	○	○	●●	●		●
HORROR PLANET / Norman J. Warren Almi Cinema Five Films, 11/82, 85 mins.		○		●	○							●●
IT CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD / Andrew Solt & Malcolm Leo, Par., 10/82, 78 mins.		○		●	●	●●	●	●	●	●		●●
JEKYLL & HYDE... TOGETHER AGAIN / Jerry Belson, Paramount, 10/82, 87 mins.		○		●●	●	○						●
KISS ME GOODBYE / Robert Mulligan 20th Century-Fox, 12/82, 101 mins.	●●●			○	●●	○						
THE LAST UNICORN / A. Rankin & J. Bass Jensen Farley Pictures, 11/82, 84 mins.		●	●●●	●●		●	●			●●		
NAT'L. LAPOON'S CLASS REUNION / Michael Miller, 20th Century-Fox, 10/82, 84 mins.		●	○	○	○	●						
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA / Robert Markowitz, CBS-TV, 1/83, 100 mins.				○				●				●●
PINK FLOYD—THE WALL / Alan Parker MGM-UA, 8/82, 95 mins.	●●					●	●	●	●●●●			
Q / Larry Cohen United Film Distributors, 10/82, 92 mins.	●●	●●	●	●	●●	●●						
THE SENDER / Roger Christian Paramount, 10/82, 91 mins.	●●	●●●	●	●	●●	○	○	○	○	●●	●	
STILL OF THE NIGHT / Robert Benton United Artists, 10/82, 90 mins.	●●	●	●	●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●	●●
THE SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE / Amy Jones, Pacific Film, 3/82, 84 mins.		●			○	●	●	●				●
SORCERESS / Brian Stuart New World Pictures, 10/82, 73 mins.		○		○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
TIME WALKER / Tom Kennedy New World Pictures, 11/83, 83 mins.		●			●	●						
VIDEODROME / David Cronenberg Universal, 2/83, 88 mins.	●●●			●●	●							●
ZAPPED / Robert Rosenthal Embassy Pictures, 6/82, 96 mins.		○			●	○						

FSC/Frederick S. Clarke KC/Kyle Counts JPH/Judith P. Harris MJK/Michael J. Kaplan
BK/Bill Kelley MM/Mike Mayo DS/Dan Scapperotti

OUTER SPACE, which it unfortunately resembles. Special effects are primitive, such as blacking out the upper corner of the frame and pasting a moon over it for atmosphere. Stephen King reportedly endorsed this film, but it's a pretty pathetic experience. **JPH**

HOUSE ON SORORITY ROW

Directed by Mark Rosman. Artists Releasing Corp., 1/83, 91 mins. With: Kathryn McNeil, Eileen Davidson.

Slick slice 'em and dice 'em thriller that tells the same pointless story: bungled prank equals revenge; pretty coeds equals meaty victims. Yawn. Does anybody still

care? High points: Richard H. Band's score, some nice production design and a gorgeous blonde whose dress is the size of a postage stamp. **David J. Hogan**

I, DESIRE

Directed by John C. Moxey. ABC-TV Columbia, 11/82, 100 mins. With: David Naughton, Dorian Harewood.

As the title implies, this is blood-sucking played for Harlequin romantics. There is an intriguing premise here—a vampire poses as a hooker to bait victims—but the film develops neither sexual nor supernatural themes. **Tim Lucas**

KISS ME GOODBYE

With: Sally Field, Jeff Bridges, James Caan, Claire Trevor.

Slow-paced attempt at a comedic ghost story, with Sally Field forced to choose between her dead husband (Caan) and her nerdy boyfriend (Bridges). The comedy falls flat, and no attempt is made at special effects. **JPH**

THE LAST UNICORN

With the voices of: Mia Farrow, Christopher Lee, Tammy Grimes, Angela Lansbury, Rene Auberjonois, Jeff Bridges.

While lacking the consistent visual splendor of THE SECRET

OF NIMH, this Japanese-American co-production of Peter S. Beagle's wry and delicate fantasy has a much stronger story, as well as more memorable characters—in particular, a giant, flaming red bull, a peg-legged cat and Angela Lansbury's mean witch, Mommy Fortuna. Animation quality wavers from banal to beautiful, but the cast (Jeff Bridges excepted) glows in their fine vocal work. **●●●KC**

MAUSOLEUM

Directed by Mike Dugan. Western International Pictures, 10/82, 94 mins. With: Marjoe Gortner, Bobbie Bresee.

Unintentionally funny pastiche of THE EXORCIST, THE FURY, and others. Though John Buechler's makeup effects are pretty good, the story is pointless. Highlights are Bobbie Bresee's frequent nude scenes. Recommended for witless mammarians only. **David J. Hogan**

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

With: Maximilian Schell, Jane Seymour, Michael York.

Fourth retelling of the classic story is a muddled TV remake enhanced by location filming in Hungary. Long on talk, short on horror and poorly paced, it mainly succeeds in making the other versions look good. Stan Winston's Phantom makeup, based on research in hospital burn wards and requiring four hours to apply, nonetheless resembles a cross between a rubber mask and James Cagney in MAN OF A THOUSAND FACES. **BK**

STILL OF THE NIGHT

With: Roy Scheider, Meryl Streep.

Director Robert Benton (KRAMER VS. KRAMER) strays into Hitchcockland and loses his bearings. This is a stillborn, lopsided romantic thriller burdened with a wobbly, implausible script, direction which never hits its stride, and performances that generate no heat. The sexy-funny premise of a psychiatrist's losing his head to a twitchy, unstrung blonde during a string of New York knife murders loses all its charge in the presence of an unusually flat Roy Scheider and a mercilessly overwrought Streep. It certainly isn't up to Hitchcock, nor does it even have the grace of a BODY HEAT or KLUTE. **Stephen Rebello**

VIDEODROME

With: James Woods, Deborah Harry.

I'm thinking of having a rubber stamp made: bad film good effects. Makeup artist Rick Baker has outdone himself, but the plot is garbage. And please, no more exploding bodies—it's gotten to be like that SC-TV parody—"He blowed up real good!" **JPH**

Cronenberg's images are so startling, his talent so great, that the film's utter lack of narrative structure is almost a crime. Woods is effective and Deborah Harry is ideally cast. Fun, but, oh, the unexplored possibilities. **David J. Hogan**

LETTERS



NOTICE TO ALL LEECHES:

Perhaps the only positive aspect of Forry Ackerman's resignation from *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (and the magazine's reported demise) was that its readers would no longer have to read of the exploits of alleged actor Paul Clemens [star of *THE BEAST WITHIN*].

I thought I had seen the last of this publicity hound, but... Surprise! There was the cherubic moron in your last issue [13:2/13:3:87], indulging in the newest Hollywood pastime—suing Spielberg.

In the same issue, an attorney wonders "what Spielberg is up to, because just about everyone in town is suing him." Spielberg is making successful movies, that's what! So all the Lisa Marie Litchfields, Paul Clemenses and Frank de Felittas are coming out of the woodwork for a piece of the *POLTERGEIST* and *E.T.* pies.

If you print this letter, they'll probably sue me for libel. However,

leeches beware: *I'm not a millionaire.*

Dan Lennon
Point Pleasantboro, New Jersey

ACCORDING TO OUR LATEST SURVEY, THERE ARE AT LEAST 641 MORE OF YOU OUT THERE

It was with great relief that I read Tim Lucas' comments about *E.T.* in the current issue ["Why I Don't Love *E.T.*," 13:2/13:3/16]. I thought I was the only human alive who liked *E.T.*, but didn't love it, and I was beginning to question whether there might not be something seriously wrong with me.

Sally Williams
Publicity Dept., Bantam Books
New York, New York

MORE HOOPLA OVER THE CAREER OF TOBE HOOPER

It seems to be that Tobe Hooper may have been getting a rather bad deal from the media regarding the authenticity of his credit on *POLTERGEIST* [13:2/13:3:76]. The suggestion that his authority and creative input on the set rivaled that of Christian Nyby's on *THE THING* just doesn't strike me as valid.

Given Spielberg's traditional affection for uncluttered title cards (born witness by the absence of any reference to Paul Schrader's first draft script for *CE3K*), I suspect that rather than Nyby/Hawks, the relationship was closer to that of Spielberg and Lucas for *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*, with Spielberg in the Hooper role (although it appears Spielberg was much more involved with the postproduction on that).

It strikes me as unfair that Hooper's career may not do as well from

this project as it should, in part because of an occasionally sensationalistic need on the part of the media—film critics, the fan mags, and you guys—to be sticking your spade where there ain't no muck. The mainstream needs little prodding to believe that so innocuous a film as *POLTERGEIST* could only have been made by Spielberg. Why not? From my observations, most of them seem to be functioning under an unconfirmed rumor that Mr. Hooper's previous work has been slime.

P. B. Leonard
Toronto, Ontario

A MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR THE NASTY ALIEN WE'LL NEVER MEET

While it is true that Rick Baker's work for Steven Spielberg proposed *NIGHT SKIES* project has never been released to the public, viewers of a TV special last year were able to get a glimpse of the "nasty" alien head referred to in your coverage of *E.T.* [13:2/13:3:24]. Charles Osgood, host of the special (*EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT MONSTERS, BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK*), visited with Rick Baker at his workshop. As they toured the facility, a technician was seen fitting a metal eye apparatus into a latex mask of a quite evil-looking alien that closely resembles an artist's rendition shown in one of your previous issues [also shown above]. The mask was indeed impressive, making one lament about the classic science-fiction horror film we may never see.

Ed Kulasa
Tinley Park, Illinois

In your coverage of *E.T.* you mentioned that Rick Baker's *NIGHT SKIES* work was thrown out and not used as a basis for *E.T.*'s looks. But an



Artist's conception of Rick Baker's prototype for a nasty extraterrestrial.

earlier article [11:1:7] showed an artist's conception that looks a lot like a frowning *E.T.*, except with a smaller head and a thinner body. Will Baker's designs, which were done before *E.T.* was even thought of, ever be shown in photo form?

Steve Bydal
Wilmington, Delaware

Unfortunately, it is doubtful that Rick Baker will release any sketches or photos he might have of his work on *NIGHT SKIES*, at least for the time being. Baker has been advised by his attorney not to do so because there is some question as to who legally owns the work. Since Baker was in the employ of Spielberg and Columbia Pictures during his stint on *NIGHT SKIES*, apparently only they can publish photos of the work. When we asked Spielberg and Columbia about publishing Baker's work, we were politely—but firmly—told to forget it.

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City, State, Zip _____
Enclosed is my check money order bill me or charge to my Visa Master Charge
Interbank No. _____ Exp. Date _____
Signature, Date _____